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THE ART OF BEING A WOMAN

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THE TRAGEDY OF JOHN RUSKIN
AN ANATOMY OF POETRY
THE PLEASURES OF ARCHITECTURE
(*with Clough Williams-Ellis*)

WOMEN IN WAR FACTORIES
THE BIG FIRM
LEARN TO LOVE FIRST
THE WALL OF GLASS
NOAH'S ARK

For children

MEN WHO FOUND OUT
GOOD CITIZENS
HOW YOU BEGAN
HOW YOU ARE MADE
FAIRIES AND ENCHANTERS
A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LIFE
(*with F. J. Fisher*)

THE ART
OF BEING A WOMAN

AMABEL WILLIAMS-ELLIS

THE BODLEY HEAD · LONDON

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED WITH MUCH
AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE TO
FIVE MEN AND TWO VERY SMALL BOYS
THEY ARE, OR WERE,
AMONG MANY OTHER THINGS,
THE WRITER'S FATHER, UNCLE, BROTHER,
HUSBAND, SON, AND GRANDSONS

PART ONE

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF WOMEN

CHAPTER ONE

Should a Woman be Human?

'THE greatest scrape that anyone can get into is to be born a woman!' So said an eminent Victorian.

A more romantic view was that of a Hungarian author who once gazed into my eyes and said: 'How wonderful to be a woman! Men must make their own adventures! But you women have only to look beautiful and men come and lay everything at your feet!'

Which view is right? If you could have chosen, would you have been a man or a woman?

Today, I find myself puzzling about such ideas because a daughter's two little girls are here in the house, trotting about, full of energy and interest. They are learning and growing fast.

How should babies who are going to be women be brought up? What are we to tell them about ambition, courage, and wanting to know the why and wherefore of everything? We still feel the force of Victorian opinions, and we are also inheritors of older traditions, about 'woman's place', so that we find in the laws, in public opinion and—most important of all—in our own heads, a whole pattern of 'dos and don'ts' that we have not thought out, and we find ourselves trying to make the best of old-established ideas in a changed world.

The purpose of this book is: to discuss how the ingrained ideas, which we have inherited, affect us, as women today, and to try to decide whether a woman ought to try to adapt herself to them, or whether it is the old pattern that

wants adapting. In case we might want to do something of the latter sort, we shall need to try to find out how public opinion is formed. In general, the idea is to try to see whether there is something that we, as women, could do for ourselves—one way or the other—in order to make a better fit between the individual, the family, and society. That the fit is, at present, by no means perfect, is proved, for instance, by the number of broken marriages (there are nearly fifty-four thousand divorces a year) and by the much-publicised problem of juvenile crime.

II

The world in which we all live has changed very quickly in the last thirty or forty years, partly as the result of scientific and technical advances. Among the changes that strongly affect women in the Western world are, first that we all live longer, and, second, that, instead of bringing a dozen babies into the world, of whom only perhaps a quarter live to grow up, a married woman now, on average, expects to bear and rear only two or three children. These two things together are important because they mean that the proportion of a woman's life that will be spent in the old way—in doing the work that men cannot do—has changed. Has 'public opinion' taken account of this change?

Other changes that affect both men and women are moral. Our experience has made us doubtful of the results, in practice, of many items in the code of duty taught by our parents and grandparents. Whether this code was lived up to or not, it has had a long run and we can see for ourselves that the practical results have been alarming. Two wars fought with modern weapons in a single generation and the fear of a third war, have made even the most dutiful of us feel that we had better stop and think. The

out-and-out upholders of the old tradition really must not forget (as they usually do) that their ideas have not worked very well. Events have given us a right to ask questions.

A French writer, Jean-Paul Sartre, said, in the course of conversation, that what the modern world needs is *'l'invention morale'*. By this I took him to mean that, because of what has happened, we ought to take stock of the moral codes which we have inherited and to see whether they really do teach us how to behave to each other so that we may live in justice and friendship, and how to shoulder responsibilities that are, some of them, new.

III

What, according to the tradition we inherit, has been expected of women? In one of her novels George Eliot—a woman with a good sense of humour—tells of what used to be thought by many respectable people:

"Maggie's too cute for a woman! It's no mischief, much, while she's a little 'un, but an over-cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep—she'll fetch none the bigger price for that!"

Mrs. Tulliver, Maggie's mother, was considered just right:

"She was what is called a good-tempered person—never cried when she was a baby on any slighter ground than hunger or pins; and, from the cradle upward, had been healthy, fair, plump, and dull witted; in short, she was the flower of her family."

But George Eliot goes on to suggest, in her story, that such a character does not wear well.

Here is just the sort of point we shall need to think about, for the idea that a young woman should be 'as mild as milk' is one of the traditions we inherit. But, as George Eliot says, 'milk and mildness are not the best things for keeping'. The point is, that today we need qualities that do keep, for, all about us, we see men and women who are still active, vigorous, and even hardy at an age when women used to be old. This obviously means that the good keeping virtues may be increasingly important.

Yet this extra span of vigorous life is a thing we women have hardly taken into account. It means, for the mother of a family, that, after her children are out in the world, she may have twenty years of health and strength, when housekeeping is, once again, for two. The woman with a career can expect at least ten years of vigour after she has reached pensionable age. This new state of affairs will tend to show up the poor keeping qualities both of the coquettish type and of 'milk and mildness'. So what had we better try for? For this change, this longer expectation of life, may well be still more noticeable in fifteen years' time —when the little girls of today are big.

IV

There is another generally accepted opinion that presses hard on a young woman with decisions of her own to make. It is that, if you happen to be born a girl, you must choose: either you can work hard and have a career, or you can have a normal emotional life. If you are a man, you can have both; but if you are a woman, no. If you choose a career, you will need to have your wits about you. If you choose the normal emotional life—husband, home, and children—you will be happier if you are 'healthy, plump, and dull witted'. This view—that a young woman has to

choose, once and for all—is still widely and strongly held by many women as well as men. What should a young woman do? What is the mother of daughters to say about it to the little girls who are always asking questions?

There was a time in China when, in a prosperous house, mother and grandmother would look long and anxiously at the little girls—Willow-Flower and Peach-Bloom—as they ran about with their paper lanterns or their kites. They looked at the running children, trying to make up their minds. Should they bind the little active feet, or should they not bind them? The mandarin over the way would choose Peach-Bloom as a wife for his son if her feet were bound, and he would be a good match and a kind husband. Our decision is not quite so hard as that, but it is still hard.

Here and now, the art of growing up to be a successful woman is still rather different from that of growing up to be a successful man, and what we don't know is how far this is inevitable. The girl will need—whatever she chooses—a rather different approach to life; she will find that there is an art in it, she will have to weigh one thing with another. She will be expected to go round about in doing her work, she must often make choices that a man has not got to make. Nearly always at the end of it all—as that eminent novelist, Virginia Woolf, pointed out—she will have a little less money to spend, and find herself a little less independent than if she had been born a man.

Take a trivial instance of the difference of approach needed. Every public speaker knows that an audience often likes to be vigorously exhorted and even thundered at by a man, but that, if the speaker is a woman, the same audience, though it may want eloquence, will want it flavoured with far less denunciation and far more persuasion.

The same sort of thing is true both at home and in a job.

The woman whose duty it is to give orders hasn't so straightforward a task as the man in the same position. She must try to carry her subordinates with her, and must make them feel that it was their own idea all along. A man can often, without giving offence, save time by being quietly authoritative.

There is just as much need to study this art of persuasion if the girl is going to be a wife and mother. Hers will be an intensely real life, and she will find plenty of hard work. But just hard work, devotion to duty, or being in the right, will never be enough.

V

These arts, that we women are all obliged to practise—the looking to other people, the going round about—upset the characters of some women, because many of us are really rather downright sort of people to whom 'feminine wiles' do not come naturally. Many of us often feel a little self-conscious, or a little cynical about it all, and the men, whom we are obliged to consider so carefully, do not always find all this attention so very agreeable in the long run.

In *Back to Methuselah* Bernard Shaw makes Adam say:

"You should not think about me so much, Eve! You are always spying on me. I can never be alone. You always want to know what I have been doing. It's a burden. You should try to have an existence of your own . . .' Eve replies: 'I *have* to think about you, Adam. You are lazy; you are dirty; you neglect yourself; you are always dreaming; you would eat bad food and become disgusting if I didn't watch you and occupy myself with you . . ."

There is something here that seems to be fundamentally true about the relations of the two sexes in our society.

The good private secretary has to be careful not to let the looking-after that her chief demands, make him feel that she is intrusive, and, like Eve, most wives have come up against the problem with their husbands. A mother is quite certain to meet it as her children begin to grow up. Do you remember the time when, as a growing girl, you yourself saw the other side of it—Adam's side? At home, as a girl growing up, you probably wanted your mother to look after you; but also wanted her to have an 'existence of her own' in order that you too should have a certain margin of freedom. Remember that if you have children.

At work and at home then, we are expected to go round about. It is one of the home problems that isn't easy to solve, and, at all stages of her life, it affects the wife and mother deeply.

For we find that our families, though they may say, or at any rate feel, that they do want us to have 'an existence of our own', often lay such burdens on our shoulders that, try as we will, it is difficult for us to remain ourselves and not merge our lives in them. And yet, if we are candid, we shall agree that Adam may have been right in feeling that there really can be something unhealthy in Eve's attitude. Things can go wrong when a vigorous woman has not achieved anything outside her family. We all know the capable 'owner-driver' type of wife and mother, who, unable for years on end to achieve an existence of her own, has transferred her ambitions to her family, and has become something of a slave-driver. Openly or secretly she pushes and pulls and manages her husband and children, so that presently it is they who cannot call their souls their own. If they rebel, she has the last word—often a tragically true word—'I have given up everything for you! And now you won't even do this small thing for me!'

This brings up an important aspect of the problem that we shall be considering. It may be for the benefit of her

nearest and dearest that a married woman should have some outlet beside home-making. We want our homes to be happy, but if the home-maker has been exploited and if, later, she feels frustrated, and either becomes a martyr or an 'owner-driver', there is a danger that her home will not be happy.

VI

The difficulties that are sometimes felt by capable women who have chosen a career instead of a normal emotional life and who are out at work are more familiar. A woman who, by hard work in the Trade Union movement, had risen to the top of the political tree, said one evening: 'And what if I have got on so well? What have *I* got out of it?' To be a leading citizen hadn't satisfied her. She was no doubt one to whom, as a girl, the hard choice of marriage or a career must have seemed particularly cruel. Would she have been happier with a husband and a pack of children? Or, if she had chosen family life, would the other side of her have been frustrated? Remember, her ambitions were just and honourable and she was a success.

Such are still the problems of many young women who are thinking of training for a profession. But even those who have already decided may well find that the question is still important. For the little girls in gym tunics and plaits, the babies turning into women—our own or someone else's—are still our questioners. They have to be educated, to be trained; they go on asking, without knowing what it is that they are asking, and so we have to try to think. Will the child be happier if the side of her nature is developed that will fit her for a career, or will it be better if she expects, from the very beginning, to find her fulfilment as a wife and mother? Shall we bind the running feet or shall we not bind them?

Could it be that what we need to decide is not that at all? Perhaps what we should ask is whether this dilemma—home or career—is now as real as it undoubtedly was once when all, instead of say a quarter of a married woman's life, was spent on the work of bearing and rearing children.

VII

The longer expectation of life and less child-bearing are not the only new developments of our times. There is another new factor for the young woman to consider or for us older women to think over if our advice is asked. There has been a change in the conditions of men's work, both in the high- and low-income groups. In factories and offices and in almost all jobs, working-hours are much shorter and are now seldom more than forty-eight hours a week. It has been found that reasonably short hours are, in the long run, best for the worker and hence are more productive—that is, are also best for the job.

We shall only understand some curious facts about what people say about husbands and about how many people—both men and women—behave in their homes, if we realise that outside working-hours used to be much longer. Many of the older men and women, who tell us what should and should not be done, formed their ideas on such matters in the days of long working-hours for the man. When he got home after a 70-hour week the man really needed, as well as expected, a good deal of looking after, for he had been working hours that taxed his strength beyond what is desirable.

Today the husband's hours are much shorter, while his wife's are not—if the children are young; so that now it is the husband who usually has the less exacting life of the two. There seem to be no figures about what working-

hours are for a married woman with a young family. Seven in the morning till eight at night, with two short rest breaks of about half an hour each, seem fairly usual, not only in Britain, but also in new countries such as Australia and New Zealand. These are very much the daily hours that the husband used to have (if we count in the journey to work), except that his was hardly ever a seven-day week, and thus did not add up, as ours still do, to a 77-hour week or more.

With the shorter working-week men now have time to do many things for fun—they go in for sport, they become expert at raising flowers and vegetables, they play golf, they take an active part in politics or perhaps practise one of the arts. They feel, and rightly, that to have one of these outside interests does them good, and keeps them young. But, if their wives still work the old hours, these new perfectly real benefits may not make for a good family life? For, with their now wider, more leisurely, lives, men may be even more apt than they used to be, to feel that their wives are dull! The paradox is that it is so often the very men who feel that we wives are rather a drag, who also tell us that our 'place is in the home' and add that 'a man must get away sometimes'.

VIII

Young women often notice with dismay that middle-aged married women certainly do get dull sometimes and that many seem to have few outside interests. One such woman told me rather sadly that she would not know what to do with free time if she had it. The belief among women—almost more than among men—that no change is possible or desirable, is something that we shall need to take into account.

The older women who have stayed inside the walls of their homes behave today, we shall notice, rather as if those walls had been those of a prison.

When the doors of the Bastille were flung open the liberators thought that the prisoners would be delighted to have their freedom again. But, to their surprise, they found that it was not so. Many of the prisoners were so much afraid of the outside world that they refused to come out at all.

How does a woman become a prisoner? The answer is—easily enough: Public opinion has always worked strongly on the young married woman who wants to make her home a success. The neighbours and 'in-laws' praise the young wife who stays at home, works her 77-hour week and likes it. They tell her that she is such a good mother, they sing her praises—'Mrs. Brown's children always look a picture.' 'She makes those sweet frocks all herself.' They praise the polish on her linoleum, the spotless house, the crisp, clean, well-ironed clothes. Since all of us enjoy praise, and since these things really are achievements, and since the young wife and mother is very seldom praised (and may indeed be blamed) if she tries to keep up an existence of her own, she is very likely to drop out. She does as best she can, she works very hard, she is proud of her home, she does what comes to hand. But is this short-sighted? For all the time, while she has been so busy with the 'sweet frocks' and the spotless lino, the 'sweet children' have never stopped their stealthy progress. Without rest, without pause, they have spent the time in turning into young men and young women. Before she realises what has happened they are ready to go out into a world which has changed since the last time their mother had a chance to look at it. Let me tell a true tale. An old lady, the widow of a farmer, told a friend of mine with pride that she had never once been outside her house since

she was married, except once a week to do the household shopping and once a year or so to attend family christenings, weddings, and (of course) funerals. This old lady's grown-up children have, as I happen to know, had a very difficult time with their mother, who has behaved to them with exceptional selfishness. She knows nothing of the world and, 'a martyr to duty', does not attempt to understand their needs or problems. It was, no doubt, some trait in her own character that made her exaggerate her duty in this way. But don't forget that, at first, though it has now turned against her, public opinion backed her up.

IX

We have outlined then, very briefly, some of the puzzles with which a changing world confronts us because we are women.

But before going on, however, we must get the picture in proportion. Some 'career women' are quite content, and the life of wife and mother, as it is today, really does suit some women. In this book then, we shall be thinking of problems that confront some, but not all, women. What the proportion is must remain guesswork.

It has been my experience to talk and broadcast, on a number of occasions, here in Britain, in Australia, and in New Zealand, to groups of women or to mixed groups, about women's problems. In the next chapter we shall see some of the objections that are sure to be made when traditional ideas about wives and mothers and the choice between career and home are questioned.

CHAPTER TWO

It Can't be Done!

'HOW can a woman with a home to run get time to have this existence of her own? What with the queuing, and the cooking, and the children, and the washing, it can't be done!' This is often the objection which starts off the discussion at meetings.

Someone else is sure to say that a woman's job is to look after her husband and her home, and that if she does that properly she will have quite enough to do.

'If she does work a seventy-seven hour week it's a labour of love, isn't it?' said a business man cheerfully the other evening, over an excellent dinner.

There will usually be a 'right-thinking woman' at meetings who will say firmly that a woman *ought* not to want anything more than home-making, because this is the most creative job in the world. As for the career woman—the right-thinking woman will go on—it is absurd to waste any sympathy on her. 'She had the choice! She knew what she was doing!'

In Scotland older people seem to be particularly sure that any talk about a married woman having time to herself is wicked. 'All this talk about leeisure means the beds nae made! The washing-up nae done! Gadding oot to the pictures when the family wants its tea, and a dirrty, drabble-tailed, shiftless home!'

Such ideas are in fact widespread, and as much to the fore in Adelaide or Auckland as they are in Aberdeen or Aberystwyth.

II

Yet the newspapers are full of articles by young women who now find themselves entangled in a maze of domesticity, and when I broadcast in 'Woman's Hour' on 'The art of being a woman' I got many letters. Here is one from a listener whom we will call Mrs. Phillips:

"Stifling my conscience this afternoon, I switched on the wireless to ease my boredom, instead of taking my three-year-old into the sunshine. Now the fowls won't be fed and my six-year-old daughter won't be met from school as I'm *taking time off* to write this.

" I was delighted to hear you, and wish I could have a record of it, and have pamphlets dropped by plane and the placards posted with extracts from it.

" I've been married 11 years, and am devoted to my children and husband—all love me and are obviously happy, contented personalities. ME? ! Day by day I become more warped, bitter, and almost hysterical with frustration. Why? Life's door is shut—there's time for nothing but chores, chores, chores. I've tried hard to break the vicious circle. I sold my piano because it was the symbol of frustration when my little girl was three. I've tried studying French at home, but it was put on one side for the darning, so I tried to go to a class, and leave the house behind. 'Socialism and Christianity' was the class, and, *when I was able to go*, I was thoroughly interested and keen, although I had scarcely a minute for reading. The course ended, so this year I've fought a losing battle trying to take a course in 'Child Psychology'—well, I'm still *hoping* to wade through the text-book.

" I've no friends in the neighbourhood and during the war lost touch with most of my other friends.

" My husband has football Saturday afternoons, and serves on the local Conservative Committee, besides being a member of three or four Societies and Associations. I

think it's good for him, and my outlook is widened slightly when he discusses his interests. But is 18 hours' drudgery a day a fair price for a home and children? . . ."

Another letter was from a Mrs. Davies, the wife of a scientist:

"My life is one long round of dull, repetitive and oh! so monotonous household duties which seem endless. I can never sit down and relax with an easy mind, because my conscience keeps reminding me of the hundred and one jobs which still remain undone. I think I did have an average intelligence at one time—at least I took an interest in attending lectures, concerts, the theatre, and listening to interesting conversation. Now, all these things have gone. . . .

" I am 29 years of age, with looks neither good nor bad. I trained to do social work at London University and eventually became a hospital almoner at one of the big London hospitals—this was work I liked, as I like people, and their problems interest me intensely. . . ."

Her sense of imprisonment and frustration is not, she goes on, her husband's fault, for he is 'a kind man' and she is fond of him. What shall she do? she asks.

In the suburbs of an Australian city, I got to know a nice middle-aged woman, Mrs. Blandford. Her daughter is married, she has a husband and two sons at home. We both happened to be hanging out some washing, and anyone could tell by looking at the clothes or at her family that Mrs. Blandford is a first-rate housewife. Yet, as we pegged out, this is what she said, talking in snippets as she worked:

'There are two things I really like, and all my married life I haven't had time for either of them. One's farm work.'

'You have a beautiful garden. You do all the gardening?'

'Yes. But it's not the same, is it? It was caring for the animals that I used to love and buying and selling stock. I had a lot of experience at home, on the station. . . . We had a good education too.'

'You said there was another kind of thing you missed?'

'Yes. It was music and painting that I was so keen on before I married. Well, in the end the piano just stood in the corner. I couldn't practise enough, I got disgusted and sold the thing. It's been the same with painting. Look at those clouds now. Aren't they lovely? When you draw and paint a thing it means more to you than if you just look at it, even if the painting isn't much good.' She stood for a moment, and then turned to me:

'They weren't very terrible things to want, were they?'

'And so it was all the harder to give them up?'

'If I'd been a man I should have had time for something beside my work.'

'Your husband has time?'

'Goodness yes! Why, they've got the forty-hour week here! The Unions have done a lot for the men. He's all for sport. I don't grudge it him, neither. . . . Keeps him young!' She spoke with affection. 'He's ever so good with the lads at the works, takes them out playing cricket and fishing and all that. All clean sport, you know! But I can't help thinking it would have been good for me as well to have had time now and then to do some of the things I really like.' With that she went indoors again.

Mrs. Williams is another notable housewife, who lives on a big farm in mid-Wales. For the last few years she has been unable to get help. 'If you do think you've got a girl, directly you say it's a farm, they run!' She used to have many interests but feels that never getting away from the house is getting her into a rut. 'It's not the work,'

she says. 'It's the monotony. I feel I'm not the same now.'

The reader will agree that it is not much help to say, as the 'right-thinking woman' does, that these four women 'ought' to feel that their lives are satisfactory, or even that they 'ought' to manage better. My unknown Radio correspondents, for all I know, may not run their homes efficiently, or may be the dissatisfied sort who carry their own frustrations with them, but I can however vouch for the fact that Mrs. Blandford and Mrs. Williams are well above the average.

Yet a successful 'career woman', to whom I showed the letters just quoted, wrote thus:

"It is difficult to feel sympathetic with a woman who, having an affectionate family and a normal home life, is frustrated almost to the point of hysteria! One cannot help feeling that the problem of woman's place in the world of today, in all its aspects, is much more subtle than that of the working-woman with too much to do!"

Now one point about this is that today the problem is just as much that of the professional man's wife as of the 'working woman' and it is certainly more subtle than that of 'having too much to do'. With this view it is hoped the reader will presently agree, also with the idea that the housewife's problem is definitely part of the general problem of 'woman's place in the world today'.

But all the same, the problem of the frustrated woman at home at all levels of income and education, is an exceedingly important one. For one thing, there are about twelve million married women in Britain—nearly twice as many as of single women or widows. Even more important is the fact that it is in homes that we all grow up, and we all know that it is of the greatest importance to the child's

future that 'home' should, in as many ways as possible, represent fulfilment and not frustration. The ideal of a happy home is one that both old and new knowledge applaud.

III

In spite, then, of this career woman's, to me, rather odious feeling of contempt for them and their problems, it seems to be worth while to ask one or two additional questions about these four women who seem to have 'too much to do'. Mrs. Blandford in Australia and Mrs. Williams in mid-Wales may well be right in thinking that the monotony of their everyday work is doing them harm, and indeed it may be spoiling something in them that the community very much needs. What is it, then, in our way of arranging things that makes this harmful amount of work either really necessary, or seem necessary to these two intelligent people?

Another 'question arising' is the moral attitude that seems to come in. Mrs. Phillips had to 'stifle her conscience' before turning on the radio. The business man at dinner felt that 77 hours a week was all right for his wife because her work is 'a labour of love'. The 'right-thinking woman' at meetings is always sure that a woman 'ought' to be happy in running a home.

What is the answer to that last remark—that 'ought'? Surely it is that, in this sort of problem, moral judgments are rather futile.

Maybe you and I 'ought' never to have a cold in the head; but a moral judgment about it is not really much help if it turns out that, much against our wills, we both do. We want something more practical, especially if it further turns out that we cannot keep our troubles to ourselves, but that when we have a cold it 'runs through the

house', so that our children snuffle and our husbands cough. For I fancy that frustration is every bit as catching as the common cold, and greatly doubt whether a home where the home-maker feels unhappy is ever a happy one, so that I feel sceptical about the happiness and contentment which Mrs. Phillips seems to believe is the lot of the other members of her family.

Why, we might usefully ask ourselves, is this 'ought' thrown about so recklessly? Why do we so seldom hear it said that a woman 'ought' not to let her brain rust, 'ought' to take wider views, 'ought' to understand more about the world? We shall have to look for some of the reasons for this.

Meantime, we have still not answered the objection that usually comes first. 'A woman with a family and a home to run, cannot,' so it is said, 'have either free time or free energy for other things. IT CAN'T BE DONE.'

Here, at last, we have a statement about which we can bring out some equally straightforward facts.

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CHAPTER THREE

But it Was Done

THE first fact is that it was done. Do you remember? This country was in the most imminent danger during World War II. France had fallen and Hitler's huge invasion army had gathered not an hour's steaming across the Channel, and an unarmed remnant of our own army had barely been rescued off the beaches of Dunkirk.

At that time the danger to Britain was felt, and understood, and hundreds of thousands of women came out from behind the walls of their homes. Public opinion urged us out; and we had our part in the greatest mobilisation that any nation has ever undertaken. It is worth while to try to remember in detail what happened then, not only because it is a proof of what was actually done by women, but also for another reason; in the doing they helped to answer the very difficult question which can be summed up in the phrase 'What are women really like?' This is, of course, one of those straightforward questions to which there really is no straightforward answer, yet we can get a good deal of light on women and their characters if we turn back and remember how they acted at that time. So many millions of us came out that the evidence of what happened cannot be dismissed as chat about exceptions. . . . You can perhaps say that Queen Elizabeth or St. Catharine of Siena were 'exceptions', but the word becomes meaningless if it is used about the immense throng of women who responded to the danger.

Women's likes and dislikes came out clearly then be-

cause, for once, we had a choice of work. What did women choose and why?

On a long black-out journey I sat next to a land-girl. My own work had, for some time, lain mostly with women in war factories. I was curious about the land-girl and why she had chosen her job?

'I just grabbed my chance! I'd always wanted to work on the land. The war *was* my chance! I was soon out, driving a whacking great tractor! Out in all weathers.'

'Though it was less money?'

'And no promotion! Not in the Land Army!'

I felt too that I learned something about women from Kath. At a big steel works, Kath, in blue overalls, a very grand hair-do, and a very small compulsory cap perched on top of it, was minding a huge planing machine. She leaned down to talk:

'You can't rub it out if you make a mistake on this! There's a lot of work gone into it already, and if you do make a mistake it's scrap.'

'Were you frightened of it at first?'

'Me? Goodness no! I've been in the hairdressing. If you've ever given a perm, or put a customer into the dryer, you'll never be scared of this!'

Or consider the women who did hot-pressing. Mrs. Knowles, in a dark blue bib-and-brace suit over a pink satin blouse, used to work in front of a gas oven which had long legs and an open front, the licking flames giving off an intense heat. Six-inch lengths of brass, about as thick as her bare arm, were fed into the oven through a hopper by a girl named Florrie. With a pair of long tongs Mrs. Knowles used to take one of the bits of brass out of the oven as soon as it was nearing white heat and when its sharp edges became blurred. Then she would put it into position under the hood of the hot-press and pull a lever which brought the mould-stamp heavily down. As she released the press,

the rough form of what would later be the nose of a shell, would fall, still burning hot, into another hopper below. She worked long hours, month after month, at this, and there was a row of such presses all down a long shop, all served by other Mrs. Knowleses and Florries. The noise was so great that it was impossible to talk, and Mrs. Knowles' face gleamed with perspiration. Now and then she would move out of range of the heat and take a drink from a jug of water that stood ready. Mrs. Knowles had staying power.

The question of women and 'nerves' came in in the big government R.O.F.s—the filling and explosive factories. Cigarettes and matches were 'contraband', and thick walls, many small, low buildings set far apart with great spaces between, work which came through a hatch a little at a time, and a dozen other precautions were constant reminders of danger. Slow, niggling, exacting work done in such surroundings affected the nerves. Yet thousands of girls and women worked for years in such places. Four elderly housewives whom I met in Scotland all lived in the same street, and did not miss their shift on the day after their Clydeside houses fell in ruins about their ears and their street was blitzed to pieces.

Miss Janet McFarlane struck an observer as another woman of steady nerves. She looked like the recording angel or a statue of Justice, when I saw her, for she sat alone, robed in white, and was weighing samples of explosives on a balance and entering her results in an enormous book. She told me that she had been a stewardess, had been torpedoed a couple of times, and was now enjoying 'a nice shore job'. I wondered why she had chosen this jumpy place?

'Ach! there's nae danger here!' she said, her eye on the cordite, and added thoughtfully: 'Being torpedoed was pairfectly straightforward. What a didnae like was our

lifeboat being wrecked by the rescuing ship and being eight hours in water that was nane too warrm! Here we're at the richt end of th' explosives!'

These tens of thousands of women were not freaks, but their conduct, and that of a large number of women in the Forces and Civil Defence, no more fits into the common tradition of 'what women are really like' than do the exploits of such exceptional women as those who were parachuted into enemy country or those of Lady Hester Stanhope or Catherine I of Russia.

It seems, then, that tradition is inaccurate? We have not got a true traditional description of real flesh-and-blood women.

II

A woman at a conference in 1948 said that it was silly to talk about what housewives had managed to do in the war. 'With the men away in the Services, a housewife then had only half the work she has now!'

Two comments need making about that remark. The first is that the statistical probabilities were that a war-worker's husband and grown-up sons were not all in the Forces, but that some of them were also 'on munitions', for it took more than ten factory workers to keep one man in the fighting line.

The second is that many typical married women war-workers testified that they could not have carried on without the understanding, the help and the kindness of some male member of the family. Take Mrs. Dowlas—a steel worker. Her little boy of six was at school, but the infants came out at half-past three. She had also a boy of seventeen and a husband. These two were also 'on munitions'. The home and the child were managed by a careful plan of work-hours, and depended on the grown boy and the

man being able and willing to do their share, and on consideration from the Welfare departments of three different factories.

In a bus in South Wales I sat next to a pretty young girl who had just come off the day-shift in the nearby factory. She told me she had lost her mother when she was about fourteen, and since then had looked after a much younger brother and sister. Her father worked at a sheet-metal factory not far away. They had to arrange so that when he was on nights she was on days, or the other way about, and he always did his share in the house.

'I'm going to the pictures tonight,' she said with a smile. 'Dad'll give the little ones their supper and put them to bed just before he goes off to work.'

'Will you find a lot of dishes to do when you get back?'

'I'll find everything tidy. My kitchen will be lovely; he always remembers the saucepans!'

Such men were no more freaks than the women. It is a cruel libel on British men to suggest that the whole of the double burden of work and home fell on the married woman war-worker.

There was a burden, of course, and a heavy one. Whole-time work in a factory for both marriage partners was bad —was too much if there were young children. The law recognised this by exempting married women, with children of school age or under, from National Service. This did not mean, as things worked out, that no married women with young children had to go to work, for the pay and separation allowances of many men in the Forces were not enough to keep the home going. Service men's wives were the worst off too, just because their men were not there to help.

There were, of course, also thousands of married women who, like the Land Girl, saw the war as their chance to get out of the house, and they did just this—they escaped,

either ruthlessly, or else frantically; that is to say, either to the great detriment of their children, or else to the great overstraining of their own powers.

There is another important fact to notice. The community at that time did make real efforts to take part of the usual burden off the housewife, especially the burden of preparing meals. Every large factory had to have a canteen, school meals were gradually established over most of industrial Britain, British Restaurants catered for the non-factory workers. For the children again there were War-time Nurseries and play centres.

III

What were the findings after all this? As far as the experts can tell, now that it is all over, they seem to be this;

It is bad for little children under three to be in nurseries for more than a few hours at a time, however expert the care there. 'Minding' varied, sometimes good, sometimes shockingly bad. Play centres were not a success.

School meals, on the other hand, greatly improved child health, while factory canteens and British Restaurants meant an economy both in food and fuel, as well as in human labour.

As to the effects on the housewife herself, they have not, as far as I know, ever been properly traced, but anyone who saw much of these hundreds of thousands of women must have guessed that there must be undue strain.

So much for 'whole time' war work for married women.

IV

But there were factories where something different was to be seen. In a certain factory in the West of England the tail parts of Lancaster bombers were assembled, and here,

out of about four hundred workers, only a dozen worked full time. The rest were housewives and the women working the morning shift went off to the canteen for lunch and had then finished for the day, while the women who were to succeed them, went to the canteen for lunch before clocking-in and then carried on for the afternoon.

'It's most surprising,' the manager told me, 'but we find that two women doing four hours each, produce more work than one woman doing eight hours!' This was one of those remarks to which it was difficult to find a quick and polite answer! Had the man never been inside a home? If he had no wife, had he never had a mother?

In mid-Wales I chatted with a group of such 'part-timers', country women among whom a small shadow factory had suddenly been planted. I told them of two big groups of A.T.S. girls, drawn from many different parts of the country, who had all said plainly that *their* ambition was to have a husband and a little home, and to stay in it:

'They'll know better when they've been married a bit!' was the verdict. 'We lived at home till the factory came. We didn't know how lonely we lived till we had this!'

One general verdict in these war factories has a bearing on the question of what women are 'really like'. It was said that women were less choosey than men about what work they did, but more choosey about whom they worked with, and also about pleasant, clean conditions to work in. They wanted company, liked to chat at work, and responded to a pleasant atmosphere in the place.

V

But, though factory workers outnumbered the rest of us, this was, of course, by no means the whole war-time story of the 'housewife-plus'. Women came out from behind their walls and did all manner of jobs. Women with

professional training once more became doctors, dispensers, nurses, and teachers; experienced women went back to be part-time shop assistants, waitresses, laboratory assistants, telephonists, secretaries, accountants, and so on. Those who did not have to earn during the hours they now spent outside their homes worked in canteens and British Restaurants, joined the W.V.S., drove for the car-pool, worked in shelters, did Warden's work—in short, they did all manner of things to the benefit of us all, not least of themselves.

I have been laughed at more than once for suggesting that part-time work in a factory or at a telephone switchboard, or looking after lab. equipment, ever helped anyone to 'stay human'.

But it did. You could see it happening. It was a change —it worked—even if the place of work was far less pleasant than the home on which the part-timer shut the door—for once without a pang of conscience.

'I've been shut up so long, day after day, with the children,' an intelligent young woman said to me the other day at a conference, 'That I feel too shy to say a word!'

VI

So here we have a practical answer for once.

To those who say 'It can't be done,' we can reply, 'It was done.' It was done, not just by a chosen few, but by millions of women.

Let us try to list the things that made it possible for all these women to do what is now, again, said to be impossible —that is, to come out of their homes.

Except at week-ends and during school holidays, the housewife was freed of the task of one cooked meal a day for all the members of her family; also, the men of most families co-operated and did their share. That was one side of it.

The employer's side was just as important. They wanted women—whole or part-time; there was plenty of work, not at men's rates it is true, but at fairly good rates, and—women were not held down to what is supposed to be 'women's work'. Employers of all kinds, whether of secretaries or of turret-lathe hands, were so short of help that they were willing first to train us, and then to adjust hours to suit us. Part-time help seemed expensive at first, it made managements a little uneasy, it meant more clerical work; yet many found, like the manager just quoted, that 'Two women doing four hours each can do more than one woman doing eight hours'.

Third, and perhaps most important of all, that powerful thing, Public Opinion, was on the side of the woman who was 'in the war effort'. Little fusses about lino ceased to count. The standard of home smartness was lowered. Too much, you say? Perhaps. But if it was then sometimes dangerously low, perhaps it is now (once again), dangerously high?

Dangerously high? How can that be?

'Jack's mother's coming to stay. So I've spent a fortnight cleaning everything. I feel exhausted!' This was said to me by a pretty, well-educated young wife who has no children as yet and who lives in a pretty little doll's house on the outskirts of a clean little country town.

Suppose she had said: '. . . So I've been spending half my time in the public library rubbing up my ——' (shall we pretend it was local history, or marine-biology, or Elizabethan literature?) 'and I've given the house quite a polish up as well!'

Why, when we unfortunate women feel we simply must keep our end up with such critics as in-laws (we all do feel like that sometimes, even in the best regulated families) can we only acquire merit for the shine on the outside of things?

Could the standard really be dangerously high?

Is this a point on which we ought to try to change public opinion? It is a point that young women might anyhow consider.

CHAPTER FOUR

Women out at Work

SO far we have been thinking chiefly of women in their homes, of women who only come out during a national emergency. We have kept off statistics too, only remarking in passing that there are about twelve million married women in the country and that this is nearly twice the number of those who are widows or unmarried. But the reader—especially the young woman who is trying to make up her mind on this career problem—will need something more exact, for when we begin to try to picture the world, when we try to see how the people of a country actually live, a few figures help to keep the proportions.

The unmarried or widowed women in this country number five and a quarter millions. This enormous figure is not as extraordinary as it sounds, for the heading of the table is: '*Unmarried* (*over fifteen*)'. Not very many of us, when we were fifteen, either expected or hoped to be in the married category for another five or six years. (My own grandmother married when she was forty.) So if we want to know how many real spinsters and widows there are, we had better take a pair of scissors and cut our figure of five and a quarter millions in half.

What do these two and three-quarter million spinsters and widows do? What do 'career women' in general do? Holding a hasty review of people we know or have read about, we should say that a lot of them are teachers, a lot more are in the catering trade, some are 'housewives without husbands'—that is, sisters, daughters, or aunts who

make a home for someone. Then there are secretaries, shop assistants, nurses, hairdressers, and doctors. Because we have met them, or because their names are in the paper sometimes, we think also of women who are pretty near the top of some tree or other—heads of women's colleges, scientists, well-known actresses, film-stars, singers, authors, or artists. Perhaps we may also think of those lovely beings who, dressed in spangles, ride three snow-white horses round a circus ring, or who—again in snowy tulle—dance deliciously on the margin of a swan lake.

At this point I feel that the reader is rising from her chair, is growing amazed, wants to interrupt! Taking up her pen, she is even beginning a letter. '. . . Where have you been living all these years that you don't know that actresses, film-stars and circus riders and the rest, are seldom, if ever, unmarried? Or, if they are, that it is never for long?'

Yes, I knew it. I have not been deceived by that 'Miss' or that delicious 'Mademoiselle' on the programme!

What you have been doing, dear reader, with your interruption, is to crash impulsively through the careful order in which I was hoping to lead up to one of my finest effects. We were going, in imagination, to listen to some earnest Right Thinking Woman or to some Emphatic Male. The Right Thinking Woman was going to declare (as they do as periodically as chiming clocks) that if a woman is going to earn her living she must renounce marriage, for otherwise both her marriage and her profession will suffer. The Emphatic Male was going to say (and they speak out as regularly as cuckoos in May) that Independence in a woman is the end of all charm or attraction she may ever have had for Males! He was going to say, with all the satisfaction of conviction, how contact with public life rubs off a woman's bloom, how men like to be clung to and do not like a woman who is financially independent.

At that point, behind the backs, so to say, of these

earnest speakers as they stood on the imaginary platform on which we had installed them, at that very point, we were going to raise the curtain. You and I, sitting in the audience, were going to see behind them an enormous tableau—a stage filled with glamorous young ladies, pirouetting, fiddling, riding their milk-white steeds, dressed up as Cleopatra, as Nell Gwynn, as Helen of Troy, and, for full measure, standing in pyramids on their pretty curly heads, or balancing on one toe on trapezes right up to the very top of that imaginary proscenium arch.

But that would not have been the end. For then, in imagination, we would have drawn back the scarlet and gold curtains a little wider than, in real life, they can ever be drawn, and we would have shown, not only the men, with anxiously clutched bouquets of flowers, or boxes of chocolates, who are waiting at the stage-door, but also the pleasant husbands, and the rosy children which not a few of these beautiful and skilful ladies have managed to achieve.

However, having had no more than a glance at these career-lovelies, having done no more than prove that earning a living and worldly success do not always make women less charming, we must return to our figures, for the Central Statistical Office has things to tell us that are very much to the point.

II

It seems that, even now, since the war, we British women do all kinds of things besides those recalled by a hasty rustle through memory and a few newspapers. Nearly thirty thousand of us help, surprisingly, to manufacture either pig-iron or iron puddings, wire netting and steel ropes; sixty-three thousand work at engineering; a hundred and seventy thousand make cables and electric

apparatus; forty-one thousand help to make scientific instruments, clocks, and jewellery; the chemical industries employ a hundred and eleven thousand; forty-six thousand dress leather and fur; another forty-six thousand make packing-cases.

The numbers of us who help to publish and bind books are much greater than the numbers of us who write and edit them. In the tailoring, cotton, wool, and hosiery trades there are twice as many women as men, the highest numbers being in the tailoring trades, at which a hundred and fifty-four thousand women work.

But we were right about the catering trades. In the summer months of 1948, for example, there were three hundred and forty-eight thousand of us at it, and there will be at least as many this year.

These figures (and I have let you off the distributive trades, banking, accountancy, shipping, and more) are, however, slightly misleading in a special way. In our first run through, we did, we must admit, miss the big battalions of women workers. But we did include many of the real 'career' jobs. The Central Statistical Office has also missed something. Among their figures of employment there are, running about unnoticed—or, rather, treated as if they were quite grown-up—tens of thousands of little girls of between fifteen and eighteen who have no intention whatever of making iron puddings as a career. These very young girls in factory, office, and workshop are fetching the tea, or running three-legged races when they are sent to get water; theirs too are the repetition jobs, they are standing ready to join up threads, they are folding paper, folding cardboard, packing chocolates; and all the while, in their minds, since they are not 'career girls' they are weighing up the merits of Stan, who has a motor-bike, against those of Syd, who, though he earns less, dances the rhumba to perfection!

And now a few last figures. The proportion of women to men in what is called 'the total labour force', is roughly this: In Industry as a whole, about a quarter are women. In the big figures for the Distributive trades nearly half are women, in the smaller figures for teaching, nearly three-quarters. In Civil Service administration about a quarter are women, in Local Government rather less than a quarter.

The point of giving the reader these facts is that the subject of women's part in the national life is often discussed almost entirely without taking the big battalions into account.

III

For the career woman in a paid job the importance of the 'bigger whole' becomes obvious when she first realises that, of all these women who are out at work, each gets less at the end of the week or the month than if she were a man. Nor is this the whole story. As was complained in a political women's monthly:

"In discussions on the economic position of women there is often a tendency to concentrate attention on two questions—'equal pay', and the admission of women to what have hitherto been 'men's jobs'. . . . These two questions do not exhaust the problem. Inequality of pay between men and women is one aspect of the wider problem of the under-payment of women in every field of work. In many women's employments there is in fact no 'rate for the job'. There is a rate based on conventional ideas of what is a suitable rate, not for the job, but for a woman. . . ."

This lower pay for women is firmly established in our customs for a variety of reasons. One is valid. Women

apparently produce slightly less than men. In some kinds of work in which men's and women's productivity can be compared, women seem to average from 75 to 85 per cent of men's productivity. Their pay, however, is more often from 50 to 70 per cent that of men, their piece-rates being almost always lower.

Even should they produce more than men, however, their pay will be less. I came across a good instance of this during the war. In a Scottish factory women were trained to do a certain casting job. Two men working a normal shift usually produced seven castings. After the girls had been trained for seven or eight weeks their production figures crawled up, soon they had beaten the men, in a little while they were producing twice as much, and finally, instead of seven castings per shift, they made over forty. The manager assured me that the job had not been simplified or broken down. I asked how they were paid. 'Oh, we don't pay them as much as we used to pay the men!' was the answer.

An 'Equal Pay' commission reported in 1946. Three of its four members—Dame Anne Loughlin, Miss Nettlefold, and Dr. Janet Vaughan—drawing their evidence from cases in the wool trade, where the piece-rates were the same, concluded that the women were slightly behind the men:

"The women's earnings for one-loom weaving represented about 91 per cent of the men's, and for two-loom weaving about 85 per cent. . . . In the case of a small sample of men and women engaged in identical work (in the clothing trade, paid on the same piece-rate), the average hourly earnings for men and for women were approximately equal (3*s.* 4¼*d.* for men and 3*s.* 4*d.* for women). . . . In the case of cotton-weaving (by far the largest overlap area in manufacturing industry), the average weekly earnings of women were 88 per cent of those of men."

It seems, then, that, while women are about 75 to 95 per cent as productive as men, they are paid as if they could produce only half, or at most three-quarters, as much.

IV

The Trades Union Council gives a blunt opinion as to why this gap exists:

"The main reasons for the difference between the rates of wages paid to women as compared with men have to be traced to the relatively weaker position of women in the process of collective bargaining."

The T.U.C. would like us to be tougher, and in effect points out that the chivalrous feelings, on which we are so often told to rely, don't seem to have been very effective.

Sir Maurice Holmes, of the Ministry of Education, who opposed equal pay for women teachers, certainly expressed a curiously unchivalrous view:

"Equal pay would be likely to discourage male recruitment, and not only because of its effects on comparative standards of living. There would be a psychological disinclination to enter what would tend to be regarded as a women's profession."

Up to 1939 twelve thousand professional and technical posts in the Civil Service were officially reserved for men, and for countless others women are in fact never chosen. These 'reserved' jobs are not, as you might think, those of chuckers-out, but include posts such as those of architectural or civil engineering assistants for which women train. There are the same sort of obstacles in other pro-

fessions—in the law, for example; while the church takes care never to pay a woman deaconess more than about £250 a year. She cannot take full orders. To a great extent, in Universities and in business the same traditions hold.

Women today in the armies of production and administration are tolerated as privates, non-commissioned and warrant officers, but cannot get up to commissioned rank. The good jobs are 'reserved', also the real money. Why is this?

In two books, in which she discussed women's place in the community, Virginia Woolf, the novelist, said flatly that, with things arranged as they are, it is almost impossible for women to rise to real eminence except as writers. This is perhaps no longer quite as true, as it was when she said it, but it was perfectly true ten or fifteen years ago. Thus we have not had time to rise very high. It had never been found possible, Virginia Woolf went on bitterly, actually to prevent women from writing, though, says she, for a long time society made a well-sustained effort to do so.

Read a few memoirs and you can see for yourself that this was true:

'My father can get almost any book for us from the Bristol library he pleases. . . . No ladies go to the library,' writes Maria Edgeworth about 1790, and, a generation later, the pressure to keep women out of literature was still strong enough, as we know, to lead the Brontë sisters and 'George Eliot' to use masculine names when at last they got their work published. Women writers in the eighteenth century had mostly, Mrs. Woolf points out, been 'effectively laughed out of their folly'.

However carefully we read the memoirs, says Mrs. Woolf, we see only a few of the casualties in what seems a strange, unnecessary war between the sexes. But we know, she goes on, that writers—strange creatures—actually like

to be encouraged and helped! So we can imagine for ourselves how many seedling talents were successfully flattened out while they were no tougher than mustard and cress.

Things are definitely not so bad as they were in George Eliot's day. It is true that, if you are a writer in some learned field, you had better not be a woman. But for a novelist or a film-script writer it is permissible. In other fields, too, things are not so bad as they were when Virginia Woolf wrote these two books, *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*.

But we must warn—or shall we omit to warn?—the brave little girl in pigtails, who plans to go out into the world and seek her fortune, that she will, in her Pilgrim's Progress, meet all manner of obstacles; not only the ordinary monsters that her brother must meet, but a special contingent of the depressing inhabitants of *Doubting Castle*. Her brother will have, no doubt, a peck of troubles, but, since it is held that she belongs to the weaker sex, she will have to meet innumerable extra ones. The worst, as was said, will be the 'doubts'—doubts of her being any use. These will be quite freely expressed and will ably reinforce the self-doubt that secretly gnaws at every young beginner regardless of sex. The world will not believe the poor girl for a moment when she modestly hopes that she might one day have something to contribute to human knowledge or human achievement. She will not, today, actually be told, as was the great Marie Curie (when as a girl she wanted to learn chemistry), that her name has been put down for the cookery class. No! She will be allowed to train. The big dose of discouragement will be given her a little later, when some prize in science or the arts, some really influential post in administration or in business, seems nearly within her reach.

V

Then perhaps we had better teach the little girl to turn her back on prizes? Yes, she could do that. But, even if she does not aspire to prizes, even if she remains drably modest, she will still be kept down and will see around her this uncreating unbelief in her power to do anything worth while. This discouragement will be given in a dozen ways. The young man living in lodgings, going to evening classes after business hours, will, as often as not, have his socks darned or little bits of cooking or washing done for him. The girl will, at best, be given facilities to do these things for herself.

So our poor little girl in pigtails who aspires to a career will not only be less well paid, but will in all ways, and at every stage, in trifles and in big things, find that her ways are made harder, for the odd reason that (so it is said) she belongs to the weaker sex.

We are at last equal before the law, and equal as citizens. But the girl is never, in the way of pay, promotion, or public consideration, given the same chance as her brother.

CHAPTER FIVE

Are Women Inferior?

IT seems, then, that women have been, and still are, treated as if they were inferior to men, and certainly as if they were very different, yet it also seems that, during the war, public opinion changed, so that, for a while, we were encouraged to put our best foot foremost and to develop any capacities we had.

The good side of the war effort in Britain was of course that we all, men and women alike, had a sense of knowing what we were all doing and why. The bad was the almost intolerable strain on us all, and the deep personal griefs which, for many of us, accompanied and half blotted out everything else that we did and felt.

Men and women went through this deep experience side by side. Consequently, today, men as well as women wonder whether it is best for all of us that 'Women's place' should again be 'in the home'. We all wonder whether there should now be 'Equal pay for equal work'. We all wonder how our children—both boys and girls—are going to feel about such problems.

If a married woman may not have outside interests, how is that going to affect her husband? In New Zealand a returned soldier said that he hated to hear a man say, as bachelors in his unit often would, that he wanted 'a wife to look after him'.

'If that's what he wants, that's what he'll get! . . . Bored to death for the rest of his life and either kick over the traces himself, or else get as dull as she will! The girl I'm

married to is going to stay human, like she is now, and like she was when I fell for her.' This couple both have jobs. But, naturally, now they want a family, and domestic help is hard to get in New Zealand. It's not an easy problem for any of us.

I know two other young married men—in London this time—who take much the same line. They belong to an income level which would have meant they were able to afford a Nannie in the old days. One said that, for his own sake, he made sure that his wife should 'stay human', because 'she gets so nervy if she's with the children all day'. He takes their young off her hands at regular times. Chiefly, I gathered, he baths them and puts them to bed; 'She cooks the supper and makes herself pretty.' He apparently finds his children of the greatest interest, and he brings a clear, fresh mind to all the varied and interesting problems of rearing and training them. What he does for them seems to be an outlet for him, not a burden. But he is exceptionally well placed, from the practical point of view, for he is a film-script writer and, though working fairly hard, appears to keep his own hours—bar 'shooting' and conferences.

The other young husband has an office job and a home in the suburbs, and is not able to help so much, though he, too, takes an active, lively part in the job of being a parent, and knows his children well. He views with some concern symptoms in his young wife of what he considers undue wear and tear and of what she complains of as 'narrowing interests'. His own job is a stimulating one, and before they married so was his wife's. Now her job is proving the reverse of stimulating. What, he asks, can be done?

All men do not take their partnership so seriously as these three, but many are beginning to think along these lines. It rather seems as if young men today feel that for everyone's sake, they would like their wives to 'stay

human' just as their fathers, if they were affectionate husbands, wanted their wives to 'stay pretty'!

An older man, who is a high government official, burst out in generous indignation one day. We were speaking of the difficulties of a certain young married woman who is a scientific research-worker and who wants to continue her investigations part-time, but could not get the necessary help with her young family. 'It's ridiculous! We must do something! These highly trained young women oughtn't to be allowed to spend their time doing housework! The world can't afford such ridiculous waste of a long expensive training.' In this case something was done, partly thanks to his exertions.

There does, then, seem to be a change in the attitude of men? But not all men have dared to change, for men, too, have their own special difficulties with 'Public Opinion'. A husband today often feels afraid of being teased or quite seriously criticised if he is known to help his wife by taking over certain jobs, or if he obviously enjoys certain pleasures —for instance the pleasure of playing with and tending little children, or if he is seen to be trying to get a grip of certain important difficult and still unsolved problems, say some of those connected with his own child's early education. If he talks about his ideas on what are traditionally women's topics he may get laughed at. The old idea of what is, and is not, 'manly' seems indeed to be almost as tyrannical and haphazard as the pre-war tradition of what is, and is not, 'womanly'. Luckily, for themselves, and for us women, many young men are beginning to wake up to this, and to see that the old tradition does actually shut them out of something human and enjoyable. They have observed that many of the things that must be done in a home really are a 'labour of love' and only become a burden if, first, you have too much of them, second, if you have to do them all the time, and third, if you always do them

alone. They have noticed that, shared, and taken in smaller doses, these jobs and interests make a change from the paid and public work that a man does, and in fact give an outlet to skills and tastes which many men possess—the sort of skills that come out in his work only if he is say a farmer, a doctor, or a sailor, and that may be cramped out of existence at a modern factory or office.

Yet so strong are the old ideas that the young man who, in his heart, sees all this, may often get laughed at both by men and women if he admits it. Why is this? Why is it that things which, in our city tradition, have come to be thought of as women's work are despised and felt to be degrading for a man? Why should a modern office worker or civil servant not take pleasure in doing the sort of jobs with his hands that he could do without derision if he were a sailor, a doctor, or a farmer? He finds that for him they are taboo, because they seem to belong to women who are in fact a despised class of the community.

II

A sort of undercurrent of contempt of women seems, all through the centuries, to run under and beside the chivalrous view that some men have really held, and that most men have professed. Women are frivolous, they are merely the reward of the weary warrior. So said the Nazis not so long ago.

> All that in woman is adored
> In thy dear self I find;
> For the whole sex can but afford
> The handsome and the kind.

Thus wrote a seventeenth-century poet. But we need not search many books to find still more and quite different accusations against us.

Three centuries ago, when Mary Tudor was on the throne of England, when Catherine de Medici controlled France, and Mary of Lorraine was Queen Regent of his native Scotland, John Knox gathered together everything disagreeable that had ever been said about us. He wrote while he was in exile, and when, in all three countries, his Protestant co-religionists were being persecuted; his feelings were strong, and he jumped to the conclusion that it must be all the fault of these three queens. There ought not to be women rulers, he concluded! He took up his pen, he gave his pamphlet an exciting title—'The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women'.

"Nature I say, doth paint women forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish: and experience hath declared them to be inconstant, variable, cruel, and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment. And these notable faults have men in all ages espied in that kind, for the which have they removed women from rule and authority. The law doth pronounce womankind to be the most avaricious (which is a vice intolerable in those that should rule or minister justice). Aristotle doth plainly affirm that wheresoever women bear dominion, there must needs the people be disordered, living and abounding in all intemperance, given to pride, excess, and vanity."

He quotes St. Paul:

"In her greatest perfection woman was created to be subject to man. After her fall and rebellion committed against God . . . she was made subject to man by the irrevocable sentence of God. . . . I suffer not a woman to teach, neither yet to usurp authority above man. . . . Let women keep silence in the congregation, for it is not permitted to them to speak."

Knox doesn't even think that we should dress well, but approves of St. Ambrose's view:

"St. Ambrose hath spoken much of the simple arrayment of women: he addeth these words: woman ought not only to have simple arrayment, but all authority is to be denied unto her: for she must be in subjection to man as well in habit as in service; because death did enter into the world by her, there is no boldness that ought to be permitted unto her, but she ought to be in humility. Yea plain it is that all woman is commanded, to serve, to be in humility and subjection."

III

To the edition of the tremendous 'First Blast', in which I looked up these quotations, is added an appendix which may well amuse the reader of today. It is called 'John Knox's Apologetical Defence of his First Blast etc. to Queen Elizabeth'. For Knox had, as it turned out, put his foot in it. It so happened that Elizabeth, when she became Queen of England, became also the support and hope of Protestantism. But, as might be expected, she took a poor view of his pamphlet, and it was in vain that 'Master Knox hath mitigated somewhat the rigour of his book.' The comedy did not end there. Knox was a Calvinist, so Calvin—Knox's Party Leader—in an effort to heal the breach, sent Elizabeth his own commentaries on Isaiah. But his messenger brought him back chilling words: 'His homage was not kindly received by Her Majesty, because she had been offended with him by reason of some writings published with his approbation'. 'The First Blast of the Trumpet', had backfired disastrously.

Perhaps the moral is that pamphleteers should not let indignation over particular evils push them into generalities which may later prove politically awkward.

Myself, I think that many upholders of 'women's rights', a generation ago, did rather what Knox did. That is, they saw that something was wrong and they hastily blamed men, exactly as Knox hastily blamed women. In both cases they would have done better to try to look a little deeper.

Yet it is not enough to say that Knox's passionate feelings against women were simply due to his being a Protestant and to his being up against three Catholic rulers who happened to be women. We find that, in almost every century, a real dislike of women crops up in the writings and words of certain men. Sometimes this anti-woman feeling seems to be contempt:

> Nothing so true as what you once let fall,
> Most women have no characters at all!

says Pope. Sometimes it is real hate that peers out; sometimes it is a feeling that has softened into the Victorian condescension—

> Be good, sweet maid,
> And let who will be clever.

John Knox's pamphlet was indeed neither the first nor the last trumpet-blast in a perfectly real, if rather one-sided, sex war.

What seems odd is that, as the centuries passed, many of the usual accusations against women were dropped for their opposites. Men who dislike or are contemptuous of us now, do not say that we are 'impatient, inconstant, and variable' but that we are more 'set in our ways' than men. In a modern factory you will find managers who say that women stand up to repetition work better than men and who then add that this is also true of the nearly feeble-minded.

Being sensitive human beings, being well aware that we

each of us really have flaws and imperfections, women are naturally intimidated by all this and begin to wonder if perhaps it is all true. Perhaps we really are inferior to men in everything—except, perhaps, morals?

IV

What evidence can we find on this point—the inferiority of women? Writing a book for children about famous people, I found it hard to find women, except novelists, who measured up to the required tests of fame and achievement. The few really eminent women who were not writers—Madame Curie and Florence Nightingale, for example—were objected to by the publisher because they had already been trotted out so often by other authors similarly in search of 'great women'. It was easy enough to find women of second rank. There were famous actresses such as Sarah Siddons and Sarah Bernhardt, who would have made good subjects, there were politicians such as yet another Sarah, the first Duchess of Marlborough (an odious woman); there were explorers such as the delightful Mary Kingsley or Gertrude Bell, painters such as Angelica Kauffman or Berthe Morisot; mathematicians such as Madame de Chatelet; musicians such as the 'cellist Suggia. At this high, but not extraordinary, level it is easy to go on with a list of women's names which will only be limited by the writer's knowledge of the history of their different subjects. But so far there seem to have been no women who measure up to the very greatest—Copernicus, Newton, Einstein, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Giotto, Beethoven, Goethe, Mozart, or Abraham Lincoln. These were all men of supreme power, in their several fields, who shook the world, enlightened it, or pushed it forward, and we can think of no women to set beside them.

Why is this? The simplest answer would be, of course,

John Knox's 'Women are inferior', and we dare not accept too readily Virginia Woolf's contention that it is because the world never gives women a chance. It would be a work of great interest and importance to try to analyse what were the obstacles and the opportunities of these greatest of men. We have not, in many cases, got the materials for such a study, but we know that many of them had few advantages and had to face tremendous difficulties both as children and later on. Does it then seem fair to say, as Mrs. Woolf suggests, that women have not risen to these heights because the difficulties that faced a woman or a girl were always even more overwhelming?

There do seem to be hints that this might be so—not quite evidence perhaps, but stray clues.

One or two celebrated women were, owing to special circumstances, not hampered by the fact that they belonged to the wrong sex—they were, for instance, Saints or Monarchs. In these two categories we find women who undoubtedly became 'top of the class'. There are St. Teresa and Queen Elizabeth, to take two completely opposite personalities. Queen Elizabeth was probably the most astute ruler that England ever had, and St. Teresa left a clear mark on the history of her church. Or consider another oddly assorted pair—two Catherines this time—Catherine the Great of Russia and St. Catharine of Siena. Here are four women of world fame, who met no special obstacle because they were women.

V

One of our difficulties in thinking about this part of our subject is that we have been using undefined terms—that is, words which we understand in a sort of way, but which mean different things to different people, words such as 'fame', 'authority', 'good', 'great', 'bad'. John Knox threw

such words about with a grand explosive effect, but when we try to analyse them they prove to be so vague that we soon begin to wonder if it is possible to compare the qualities of human beings at all?

We seem in fact to be bogged down, to be listening to a hubbub, not trying to think out an argument. We should perhaps ask the contestants 'What do you mean by "great", "famous", "authority", "good", and all the rest?' But if we did we should only get a hubbub of an answer.

VI

Fortunately there is a way out of this very real difficulty in which we have found ourselves involved—the difficulty of comparing rival shouts of rage. Modern science luckily provides a small island of fact in this bog of rival opinions. The modern use of intelligence tests provides us with one measurable quality on which we really can compare men and women, or at any rate boys and girls.

Intelligence tests are devices to measure what we might roughly call 'teachability' or 'mental horse-power'. The results, let us remark at once, make it possible to say definitely that, in this quality, boys and girls are equal. We can rest assured that the tests are reasonably reliable, though they are not perfect, but they have now been in use for a long time—twenty or thirty years—so that their results could be followed up, and they have been used on a very large scale indeed, first in America, and then in this country. Intelligence tests don't measure all human qualities, but they do measure something. The devisers of the tests tried especially hard to weed out one source of muddle for which it is usually difficult to allow, when we try, by other methods—such as ordinary examinations—to judge who is 'clever' and who is 'stupid'. Intelligence tests have been so planned that they give, as near as may-

be, an equal chance to the well-taught and to the 'under-privileged' child. What they measure is not what a child has actually learnt or what it understands, but what it is capable of learning and understanding. Hundreds of thousands of boys and girls in school, first in America and later here in Britain, have been graded in this way at every age between five and fifteen; thousands of younger children have also been tested, and hundreds of thousands of adults were tested in the course of World War II. The results show that while differences in heredity, and probably nutrition and general health, are almost certainly associated with differences in intelligence, sex is not. Thus we can now at least say definitely that girls and boys are equal in this kind of intelligence.

Then what, an imaginary objector might ask, becomes of all the clever girls? For, as was said a few paragraphs ago, in the achievement-tests of real life, men do seem to get ahead of women.

There are several possible answers to this question. The first is the one given so emphatically by Virginia Woolf. She says that the scales have for hundreds of years been so heavily weighted against women that it has been impossible for them, unless they were queens, saints, or novelists, to get on as well as if they had been men. The second possibility is that, when she grows up into a woman, something happens to the girl with the very highest level of intelligence which makes her either unwilling or unable to use her powers to the full. (It might be, for instance, that her emotional life tends to crowd out her other ambitions and feelings, or that there is a special brand of female cynicism which makes her hold back.) Another is that, till less than a hundred years ago—a short time in the perspective of history—most women who were fully emotionally equipped spent the best years of their health and energy in the exhausting business of childbearing.

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VII

Let us at this point summarise some of the facts that we have assembled in this chapter. It seems that, in the past, there has been, in our civilisation, a widely held belief that women are inferior to men. Second, that in one measurable quality—a certain kind of intelligence—this has been proved to be untrue. In other chapters it has been suggested that the tradition of our inferiority has not made for the happiness of the community. If all this is true, what are we to do about it?

I do not believe that, in the long run, this 'Art of being a Woman' is really the art of adapting ourselves to things as they are and making the best of them, necessary and important as this may be in the short run.

If we are not going to fail in making the most of our own characters and talents and in our responsibilities to the little girls and boys who are growing up, we shall have, or so I believe, to take a wider view and see what we can do to improve ourselves, to improve our chances of understanding our problem and, in so doing, to see whether we cannot change some old traditions.

VIII

What should we expect to be the consequences, now, of the fact that women really have been treated as if they were inferior to men?

We shall always find, unfortunately, that a nation or a class which is consistently treated as inferior, comes, after a while, to some extent to deserve such treatment. For hundreds of years the whole working class of Britain were treated by the upper classes as inferiors, and it seemed reasonable to the people in power to go on feeling

and acting in this way when it was seen how 'the mob' often behaved.

Actual slaves really do become slavish, and there were quite good arguments against giving equality to American negroes. The people of a nation treated as the Irish were treated really do become unreliable, cynical, and feckless. 'You cannot give such people self-government, they are not fit for it' always comes in time to seem a reasonable argument if there has been oppression. Instances of what happens to people who are oppressed could unfortunately be multiplied—just this sort of thing was said by the British of the people of India, it was said by the Nazis of the Jews, it is still, alas, being said today in many lands of many peoples and classes.

If men today criticise women, if women criticise themselves, the criticism is very likely unjust, but it is not therefore necessarily untrue.

It cannot be supposed that we—as women—have not suffered from the treatment that first the laws, and later Public Opinion, have accorded us, and the harm will not have stopped there. For we must also remember that if those who are treated as inferiors always seem to suffer, those who feel they are superior degenerate too; they tend to become unfeeling, they lose their sense of comradeship, and their sense of justice is blunted. We can observe this process in what we read of the behaviour of the English in Ireland, the behaviour of the aristocrats before the French Revolution, or see it working out today in South Africa. Where the ties are very close—between men and women for instance—the poison may be all the more dangerous, endangering, for example, the love of brothers and sisters, and making for ill feeling between husbands and wives.

If then for our own sakes, as women, for that of men, and for that of the boys and girls now growing up into the

world, we decide that we ought to try to make a change, how are we to set about it?

Each of us who wants to play a part (and we cannot of course help playing some part), will first need to try to be realistic, we shall each of us need to look in the glass. This is so because each of us is bound to find that we really have defects of character that will hamper us if we do not recognise them and make allowances for them. There is no getting away from the fact of human imperfection. We have grown up cramped not only by the consequences of this particular defect but by many of the traditions of our society.

PART TWO

PERSONAL PROBLEMS

CHAPTER SIX

How to Look in the Glass

UP to a point a woman is better off than a man if she should happen to decide to try to improve her own character.

Our Public Opinion is unjust to men in that it too often judges a man only by what he does, and not by what he is. A man is praised or looked up to because he is important or clever at his job, or worst of all because he makes a lot of money. To make up for the fact that so many obstacles are put in the way of our doing or earning anything to speak of, women are allowed more good marks for 'being' —we are valued for being kind, for being good-natured, spontaneous, cheerful, and amiable. This is quite an asset. The worst of it is that, all the same, we may be criticised if we try to spend time or energy, or more shocking still, money, on the job of trying to improve ourselves.

So we must be bold, for we may need to spend a little of all these things if we do want to improve ourselves. Bold, not selfish, for if we can really make or keep ourselves in good trim, there is no doubt that this time, energy, and money will be well spent from the point of view alike of the family and of the community at large. It is from a firm base of personal happiness, and from the kindness, freedom, and tolerance that happiness brings, that we can all best play our parts.

How can a woman set about trying to become, or to remain, a satisfactory and properly grown-up person?

II

Suppose you wanted to advise someone else, suppose you were a doctor or an athletic coach. The first thing you would do is to have a good look over your patient or your pupil and to ask a lot of questions. Just in the same way, if you want to improve or develop your own character, you will need to have a good look at yourself, and try to see what sort of a character it is that you are trying to develop. For, fortunately, there are many sorts of satisfactory character, and each kind is developed and nourished on different food.

There do seem however to be a few basic things that we all need. A psychiatrist friend of mine speaks of the chief thing as being 'a give and take with life—a taking in, and a giving out'. Experience with many patients makes her believe that human beings are usually happy when there is this give and take, but that those who do either all the giving or all the taking will not be happy, nor will they make those about them happy.

Different natures however need to give and take different things in different proportions. What you have to try to make out is, first, what sort of person you are, and, second, what seems to be short in your diet? You will need to consider these two points with great care before you decide what you had better do about remedies.

III

All women are (I hope) used to taking stock of themselves in the looking-glass, and most of us could give a reasonably good description of our own faces. Why, then, would you and I find it so difficult to answer if we were asked to describe our own characters? Why haven't we got the knack of looking our characters straight in the eye?

First, because we are used to hearing praise or blame thrown about so wildly when other people's natures are described. We feel half afraid to say, even to ourselves, 'I am like this' or 'I am like that'. People usually talk nonsense if they ever talk about their own natures. Either they become very solemn and confidential, or else, in the course of backchat, they say things such as 'I never like to make trouble', or 'I never put my own ideas forward', or 'I'm the last person to think evil'. You and I smile when we hear that sort of thing. The speaker has not really attempted to say anything real, though we usually take it that her words mean the exact opposite of what she has said.

We hide our true characters. For even the most straightforward man or woman has hopes and fears, ideas and ambitions, which experience has taught them to conceal from the world, for the very good reason that the world will not judge them justly or kindly. We hide these things so deeply that, like a squirrel with a hoard of nuts, we forget where and what they are.

But they are not really like the squirrel's nuts, they are more like the luggage which a traveller takes on a long sea voyage.

In the suitcases marked 'Cabin' there are the obvious things we know all about. Marked 'Baggage room' there are more possessions that can be brought out when needed. Marked 'Not wanted on the voyage' are heavy trunks which we cannot get at, however much we might like to, but which are there with us all the same, right on to the end of the journey.

Our buried feelings and wishes are often good, though psychiatrists have recently taught us to be nervous about them. I suppose this is because, by the nature of things, psychiatrists, like other doctors, have few dealings with healthy, that is well-balanced, human beings. Their experience is like that of customs officers who have much to do

with smugglers, or perhaps with travellers who have, unwisely, packed a few kippers deep down in their luggage. But perfectly normal people pack up, hide, and forget many things that they had much better keep handy and enjoy. Most of us for instance hide and forget the delight we had as children in certain kinds of beauty, we hide and thus lose our natural enjoyment of many kinds of simple, harmless pleasure, we hide our soft-spots for this and that, and perhaps the pleasure we all once felt in learning something new. We hide them because we fear that if it caught sight of them the world might think us simple and might laugh.

We also hide minor weaknesses. These may not be praiseworthy, but they may be very natural. For instance, we don't much want people to know that we are shy, or have absurd little fears and anxieties, or that we are by nature forgetful and absent-minded. You may have noticed that many people compensate for a carefully hidden weakness such as shyness by being particularly bold, abrupt, or over-talkative in company, or hide a natural vagueness by forcing themselves to be very punctual, or by doing everything particularly neatly. The mischief is that if we compensate for and forget small weaknesses too completely, we don't realise that certain small virtues are more of a strain for us than for people with a different sort of character.

Lastly, even the best of us have things in our natures of which we are so rightly ashamed that we will not admit to having them at all. Most of us think we never do anything—or at any rate anything of any importance—from bad motives, and sometimes this is true and sometimes not.

Among the most troublesome of our bad feelings are fear and jealousy. They are incidentally among the defects of races or classes of people who have been treated as

inferiors. A woman may never act from motives of sex jealousy, nowadays she may be on her guard here. It is noticeable indeed that women are less competitive about men than they were a hundred years ago, but there are many other kinds of jealousy which are harder to detect, especially by someone who has always said to herself, 'I have not got a jealous nature.' I should say that of myself. Yet if I am really truthful I sometimes have to admit that it may be because of professional jealousy that I have said that Jones—another writer—is affected and shallow. The same feeling may lie behind Nurse White's opinion that Nurse Black gets on so well because she is always 'sucking up to Matron'. It is difficult to spot the bad feeling that lies behind these two opinions. They may even be just a little true. If Jones, the writer, were always sincere and profound, or Nurse Black were a perfect angel, Nurse White and I should soon catch ourselves out, and, since we are on the whole decent women, we should be too much ashamed of our nasty feelings to express them. The difficulty is, as was said, that what we felt is probably just a little true. All the same our motive has not been love of truth, but professional jealousy.

Fear is the deeply hidden motive that usually lies behind jealousy in our competitive world. We fear to fail, we fear to drop behind, we grab at success at someone else's expense, or worse we try to spoil their success, we push and assert ourselves, and drag back someone else because we are afraid.

IV

The reader might find it interesting at this point to try to check the truth of these remarks by making her own observations. Can you first think of two or three 'childish' but perfectly real and innocent tastes and sources of

pleasure that you don't now admit to? I still enjoy licking a jam or honey spoon for instance and being out in the country in a violent wind, and I like playing with and reading to children because it allows me to indulge my own tastes. I tend, however, to hide all this, and to use children as an excuse.

Can you, second, look back and find a few rather dubious reasons for certain acts or decisions? You hadn't the pluck to try something, or felt it was too much bother and then invented a more respectable reason for a withdrawal.

Can you—which is more difficult—discover a rather mean motive for something quite important that you did or didn't do, or for some judgment that you made? Perhaps not at this stage, but if not, read on and try again later.

V

The hidden parts of our characters, both good and bad, are still very much alive even if we find it almost impossible to recall them. In some roundabout way they are sure to get themselves expressed. Sooner or later the hidden things speak up, sometimes they act. That is to say, we sometimes find ourselves acting and speaking most vigorously according to promptings so well hidden that we cannot understand why we act and speak. The language in which hidden feelings speak is the language of parable, the puzzling actions to which they impel us are often symbolic. This idea is now so widely accepted that popular plays and films now often turn on the results of these unconscious words or actions.

A recent play of this kind was called *Black Chiffon*. A kind, conscientious and in every way sympathetic mother is jealous of her son's fiancée. She does not in any way admit to this hidden feeling, and indeed is half unaware of

it. She behaves admirably, helps the marriage on, and goes out of her way to be kind to the girl. Just before her son's wedding, in a moment of great fatigue, when the pressure of an old sorrow has made her feel completely defeated, she suddenly steals a black chiffon nightgown from a shop. She cannot understand what came over her, or why she did something that everyone feels is disgraceful, but it gradually comes out that the hidden motive is despair for her own spoilt life. The unacknowledged hostility she feels for her disagreeable, respectable husband has taken an odd symbolic revenge. She has disgraced herself, but she has disgraced him too.

I am not sure myself that the author of the play worked out the symbolism quite convincingly, but the fact that for many months a West End audience enjoyed the tale, shows that many people accept the fact that those who are not mad can sometimes do mad things. The story hinges on the perfectly sound idea that 'repressed' feelings do not simply cease to exist, but may have queer and very awkward ways of showing themselves.

In a slighter way we all speak out, or act out, our hidden impulses and feelings in dreams, in small slips, or, more unfortunate still for domestic peace, in 'taking it out' on the wrong person when something has annoyed or disappointed us. This does not, of course, mean that we should never repress anything, far from it, but only that it may be dangerous to hide our hidden feelings from ourselves, for the practical reason that, if we do, it is much more difficult to guard against their inconvenient activities.

The language of symbol and parable in which such feelings express themselves is difficult to read. Each of us would, therefore, find it useful to have skilled help when making the attempt to understand ourselves. Unfortunately there are not enough trained and wise advisers to go round.

But a woman who will take a little trouble, and who is, to begin with, reasonably well balanced and sensible, can do a great deal to help herself.

VI

The way to set about this self help is first to make a sort of survey, so as to get a general idea of what sort of person you are and of what seem to be your own real likes and dislikes. We are all so used to being obliging, to doing what is expected of us, and to hiding, that it may be useful to go to what may seem the absurd lengths of compiling a sort of table in order to try to weigh up each quality and even to use a system of marks. This is of course quite an old idea, and versions of such lists used to be played as a parlour game, when it was often called 'Confessions'. It wasn't actually a very good parlour game because it was no fun unless you told the truth, and some truths are definitely best hidden, except from ourselves.

VII

Let us take a neutral quality. What, for instance, is your attitude to Responsibility? Some people like a good deal, others don't. Some feel that it entirely depends what sort of responsibility it is. Try yourself out on the following table. Mark yourself nought for 'dislike' and so on up to 5 for 'like very much '.

RESPONSIBILITY

(1) I like taking entire responsibility for important things such as choosing a house or deciding about a child's career?
(2) I like taking responsibility for the wise spending of the family's money?

(3) for such less vital things as refurnishing a room—or making all the plans for a family holiday?
(4) for simple, short-range things—planning and cooking meals, altering a dress?

Now make another list and see if your feelings about practical responsibility are the same, or the opposite, if the things to be decided are intellectual or artistic—say, choosing the items for a concert, choosing books and pictures.

You may decide not to use the marks suggested, but just to make up your mind which of these kind of things you prefer to leave entirely to somebody else, and which of them you prefer to take over, and which to share.

What you are here trying to find out is how far you are self-sufficient, largely with a view to finding out whether the life you lead gives you enough or too much responsibility. This quality of self-sufficiency is a quality in which people vary very much and about which they feel differently at different ages and in different states of health. Do remember that you are not trying to rank your moral worth. Neither self-sufficiency nor its opposite is either good or bad, though circumstances may make any mixture appropriate or inappropriate.

VIII

People vary in the amount of routine they like. Actually all of us both like and dislike it. Even people who hate regular hours would not find it convenient either to work or to sleep for 48 hours at a stretch. Also, not even the greatest lovers of routine could bear to have the same food every day for a year for their morning, midday, and evening meals. The way to rank yourself here is to analyse your week's work and then to see which are the routine

jobs you like and which you dislike. If you are a student consider if you prefer listening to lectures or writing essays, or reading, and rank social activities and exams. If you are a professional or career woman, say also what you feel about your journey to work and your luncheon break, as well as about the work itself, and don't forget the domestic jobs you do. The reader must here of course supply her own headings.

Go through the week from Monday morning till bedtime on Sunday, and put down all the routine work. Those which bore you and which you dislike should have nought after them. Those you like can be ranked from 1 to 5, again. Add a note as to whether you like this routine to be interrupted by an occasional crisis or rush and whether you like your pleasures to be expected or unexpected.

Making out this table, it will tell you not only about the matter in hand—what you would cut out if you could—but about one or two other points. The first is about your general feelings of security or insecurity. Many secure people enjoy a certain amount of routine because it saves bother. Insecure people usually cling to routine and are upset by the unexpected. Here again there is nothing right or wrong about your feelings, so don't hide them from yourself. You may have perfectly good reasons for feeling either insecure or secure. There are further points of which more under other headings.

IX

Making out this table will help to suggest whether your work, as a whole, is a means to an end, or whether you like it for itself? Let me give an example.

I, on the whole, dislike domestic work, though I know well enough that it must be done. Consequently I prefer bed-making and washing-up to other domestic routines

because they are easy, and so I can think about something else. A liking for the more creative kinds of routine, such as cooking, suggests that in domestic work you find something into which you can, and do, put a good deal of your personality. The domestic jobs I enjoy all have, I find, to do with looking after children. Your attitude to doing mending and to altering clothes (certain to have figured in your list whether you are student, 'career woman', or housewife) will be interesting. Preferring stocking-darning, as I do, to the more responsible job of 'letting out' or 'taking in' shows what a meagre miserable attitude I really have to domestic work!

If you are a 'career woman' or a student compare your attitude to domestic jobs to your feelings about your other work. I, though not bright in the house, am not, however, a moron, or even lazy. In my profession it is the more creative stages of writing I mark 5, and routine, such as proof correcting or indexing, would rank 1 or 2. Your list and markings will bring out other points. Let me again illustrate:

At a meeting, in the course of discussion, I asked a group of oldish housewives if they thought there was any part of the domestic routine that could be altered so that housewives could have a little more free time? This was a group that had said most emphatically that 'woman's place is in the home' and that a woman 'ought' to enjoy being a homemaker and nothing else. Yet the only change in domestic routine they could suggest was to abolish Sunday dinner.

Now Sunday dinner is usually the time when the whole family can gather and enjoy a time together. Their suggestion surely showed a hidden hostility to their nearest and dearest. Outwardly they were all for 'duty', but the hidden feeling was of resentment, I fancy.

You may further find that your list shows that you like

doing a particular job for one person but that it bores you when you have to do it for another. You may thus come upon a little bit of information that you had better keep to yourself and ponder over. The facts may be quite complicated. I suspect for example that the group of housewives had forced themselves to be so dutiful that they had developed a streak of downright dislike for their dear family, who may or may not have been innocent of exploiting them.

Take one last look at the list you have made and now decide which of the jobs you listed you find most tiring. It is almost impossible, without taking thought, to say whether a given duty is *really* tiring because it is creative or plain hard work, or whether it *seems* tiring because doing it goes against your personal grain, or because, in your heart of hearts, you don't think it need be done at all. You may find, at a further stage, that work which you find exhausting is not tiring to someone else and—in profession or home—it may thus be the very thing you can delegate. Don't go on tamely disliking a person because he or she makes such a lot of work. Think out the problem. Such continued dislike may be unjust and is usually dangerous.

X

We all know that it is possible to learn a good deal about a person by the way he or she dresses. When we choose and put on clothes we express ourselves both consciously and unconsciously. Mr. James Laver is a writer who has had a great deal of fun with history by using these clues. A psychologist—Dr. Fleugel—wrote a whole book on the subject.

Fleugel points out that it is easiest to begin to read the language of dress by studying primitive peoples. They hang themselves with trophies, such as fishes' teeth or

scalps, they try to terrorise an enemy with war-paint, and they show off their riches by decking themselves out with precious and rare things such as jewellery.

Like our own soldiers, airmen, sailors, judges, and bishops they also express rank and function in the community by means of dress. Men and women nearly always dress differently, while the priests and priestesses of different religions express solidarity by the religious 'habit' they wear, just as our nuns and priests do.

All these things belong to the conscious, social side of dress, but Fleugel goes on to point out that, in weighing up a stranger, we know, usually without putting it into words, that they tell us about themselves by their clothes. See what you can find out about yourself by taking stock here. You will soon see that your motives in dressing are mixed, so, as far as the questions allow, mark yourself for the first five questions under each of the three columns. Let 0 once more mean not at all, and 5 mean an emphatic yes.

	Myself.	*A particular person.*	*People in general.*
1. I dress in order to please?			
2. to impress and compete with?			
3. to avoid the criticism of?			
4. to imitate?			
5. I dress very formally and feel my clothes to be a sort of armour because I feel I need protection from?			

6. I dress merely to cover myself and in despair because it is no good my trying to look nice?
7. at random because something catches my fancy in a shop?
8. absently-mindedly, supposing that it doesn't matter?
9. I feel my best in elegant ornamental clothes?
10. in practical, warm clothes?
11. in bathing things?

I once asked a light-hearted friend for whom she chose her clothes. She replied : 'For the police report! I'm determined that it shall begin, "The body of a respectably dressed woman . . ." '

XI

It is equally obvious that we each express ourselves by the things we do in our leisure. What do you do with your free time? What would you like to do with it? You may enjoy this whole list of course, but possibly not equally? Mark from 0 to 5 as before.

1. Do you like leisure activities, such as dancing and parties, which bring you into contact with other people?
2. Or solitary activities such as reading a novel, listening to the wireless, going alone to the cinema, or watching television by yourself?

3. Do you like adventure in your leisure? Would you like to choose, say, mountain or rock climbing, or bicycling or walking from one Youth Hostel to another or sailing a boat?
4. Or do you like seeing fresh things—say travelling abroad?
5. Do you enjoy creative activities such as gardening?
6. Or do you want to study and learn for the sake of learning?

It will be revealing if you can say something about how you came by most of your friends. Count up and see how most of them rank in this list.

1. Older?
2. Younger?
3. Do you like them because they have the same tastes?
4. Or because they bring something quite different into your life?
5. Do you value them for what they can do for you?
6. Or for what you can do for them?
7. Did you choose them, or did you come by them, so to say, accidentally?

Almost certainly your motives in choosing your friends are mixed, so that you may find it too difficult to mark such a list like the others, even if—in this case—you try marking one friend in one way and one in another. But, nevertheless, try to analyse your attitude here; it will be rather difficult, but it will add to your knowledge of yourself. You need not feel that it would not do to confess that you care for some people for what they can do for you. You may feel that you learn from them, or that they have a steadiness or a cheerfulness that you need.

One thing about all these self-measurement lists will probably occur to you. Neither you nor your friends have stood still. You have changed and matured. Can you say

anything about how you have developed? Think back and try to see how the tastes and feelings of today, as the lists have revealed them, compare with those of your school days. Try to remember, and if you can bring yourself to take the trouble, make parallel lists to remind yourself in detail of what you used to feel before you grew up, about your lessons, your school-fellows, your clothes, and your amusements.

I hope that you really have had the patience to compile and then compare these two sets of lists, because comparisons and apparent contradictions may appear and may prove illuminating. To give a simple instance, you may in one list have put yourself down as preferring sociable amusements, and yet in another you may have noted 'doing the shopping' as one of the routine jobs you now dislike, though as a schoolgirl you found it fun. This sort of comparison, this finding of what look like contradictions, may tell you a good deal. Though shopping satisfies some sociable grown-up people, it will be enjoyed chiefly by those who are content just to look at their fellow creatures, who want to get out of the house, who enjoy the brightness of shop windows and like having a passing word with this one and that. But it may tantalise other sociable individuals, because they are the sort who want to know what goes on inside the heads of these same fellow creatures, and who want and need a variety of much closer contacts.

XII

These lists don't attempt to take you very far in finding out about yourself, though a few unexpected hints should have emerged about such important things as your deeper feelings about the people with whom you work, or about your nearest and dearest, or about matters in which you feel inferior or inadequate. It will be enough if you find

that, after such a simple kind of looking-in-the-glass, you are in a better position to see what sort of a person you were and have become, and also what appear to be the strong and weak points—for you—of the life that you actually lead. One of the main things is to grasp that what you need and want are not the same as what another woman should have. It's not wrong for people's need to differ. Most points you will have noticed are not matters of 'good' and 'bad', but of difference, and of variety of emphasis. Everyone needs some responsibility, but different people will thrive on different amounts of it, and on different kinds of responsibility. Everyone needs an occasional good time, but a few have too much pleasure and a great many have too little. Some women, who would thrive on a roving life, get fixed into a very set routine and cannot move. Some women, who would like to put down strong roots in one place or at one job, get blown about from one thing to another and never get time to settle. Some like to work at full stretch for a while and then relax utterly; some prefer a steady, undisturbed pace.

Practical points and some more fundamental character problems are being reserved for other chapters, but the lists may have brought into the minds of some readers a character difficulty which should be considered at once.

Some readers may realise that they would fill up their lists in one way one week and in quite another way the next.

Such a person very likely belongs to what the psychiatrists call the 'Cyclic' type of personality. Some of us are aware of ups and downs of mood, of energy and cheerfulness, and have also noticed that these changes seem to follow a queer and apparently inexplicable pattern which may have little to do with health or outside circumstances. At one moment such a person will have the strength and courage to rise to opportunities or to fight against diffi-

culties; at another everything seems to fall flat. An invitation comes, we are feeling unsociable or despondent and say we can't go. The evening comes and we feel cheerful again and wish we had accepted. If you do happen to have that sort of personality, it is a help to be fully aware of it, for then you can look ahead and allow for it and discount it. Try to remember not to take on too many things when you are feeling energetic and optimistic, and when you are down, bear in mind that that phase won't last either. Also remember that it is often difficult for other people to allow for or to follow your moods. You can do one of two things—either soft-peddle them or confess to them, but should not as a rule suppose that other people will automatically allow for them and will never misunderstand you.

XIII

If this were a book by a psychiatrist, he or she would probably, in the next chapter, describe a number of psychological types in order that each reader should try to decide which type seemed most like her own. Being a novelist, I shall give instead a little gallery of portraits. It is difficult to feel at home with 'types', indeed the psychologists warn us that it is not usually possible to point to a real living person, let alone to a pleasant, successful person, and say that they are an example of this or that type. Thus a reader cannot identify herself with any of them. Two further advantages can be claimed for the following miniatures: first, that, taken altogether, they give an idea of the wide range of human, and particularly of feminine personality, second, that the reader who may have noticed that one or two seem a little like herself, can study these personalities at leisure. For there are books about all these people, whether they are real, like Mrs. Trollope, or imaginary like Ann Elliot.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Gallery of Portraits

HERE then is a gallery of miniature portraits not of types. To any one reader one or more of these pictures may prove to be not so much a picture as a scrap of looking glass. As she reads the chapter she may lay down the book for a moment and think how, if her circumstances had happened to be more like this other person's, she might have developed very much the same kind of character. Of other portraits she will feel at once that they are of people so different at their ambitions, tastes, and temperament that there never could have been any resemblance. Each portrait is of someone who, though not very singular, yet stood out in some way. These are, in fact, notable people. Though their characteristics were more fully developed than those of most of our own friends, they were most of them not wildly eccentric—indeed it was a temptation (because the odd are entertaining) to choose out much stranger characters. Taken as a collection they prove that, without going outside the normal, and sticking in the main to creative and agreeable people and also without going very far back in history or very far away in geography, we can prove to ourselves the immense variety of human nature.

II

Mrs. Trollope, who was the mother of Anthony Trollope the novelist, was twenty-six when she married. She is an

example of the sociable and optimistic type of character and, as things turned out, she needed all her courage and energy. Michael Sadleir says of her:

"She was a devoted Mother, a clever hostess, and an untiring if slapdash housewife, most happy when surrounded by the crowds of her children and her friends. . . . She was eager to know and see a little of everything, always glad to make a fresh acquaintance, or to learn of a fresh enthusiasm . . . to acquire a new bonnet or a new book. . . . She had the sort of curiosity towards life that responds to every new craze."

Only such a woman, he goes on, could have endured the adventures into which she was led by her erratic husband, who was always thinking out wonderful schemes for making a fortune, forever losing every penny, and who left his wife and children stranded in out-of-the-way places—for instance in remote towns in America, which, a hundred years ago, was a very new country indeed.

A more sensitive, less easy-going woman—a woman less casually adventurous—would have been driven distracted by the ups and downs through which she had to protect her children, and by the embarrassing difficulties over which she finally triumphed.

"Frances Trollope took everything as it came with a laugh and a fresh burst of energy. Whatever was required of her she gave, as much from the joy of giving as in expectation of profit or success."

She had her faults of course. She was rather conventional, and she was not quite clever enough to see that her ideas of right and wrong were not the only possible ones, also she was rather a snob. These qualities made her

dislike the Americans and she wrote a book which offended them very much. Had life pressed her less hard she might not have needed, and therefore not have grown, her thick protecting shell of conventionality.

III

Dorothy Wordsworth, who was the sister of William Wordsworth, and Emily Dickinson, who was one of the best poets that America ever produced, were both women who, in contrast to Frances Trollope, grew practically no protecting shell at all. They were both sensitive and intelligent, with a delicate and vivid understanding of natural beauty. Both owed their special quality first to the vividness with which they saw, second to their power of loving, and third to their power of passing on their impressions to others. Both, as grown women, saw colours and shapes, and heard sounds as clearly and with as vivid delight as we all did as children.

Dorothy Wordsworth was however by no means a hot-house plant. She was for instance a hardy traveller. She and her poet brother took walking and driving tours that lasted for months through the wild mountain country of the Lakes, the Highlands, and of Switzerland at a time when such tours really meant fatigue, great discomfort, and even danger. Dorothy's difficulty in later life was that, though she was so hardy physically, she could not stand up to private emotional strains that many of us have to endure. We see in her a nature which is not as uncommon as might be supposed.

Emily Dickinson had the same vivid perceptions, but was even less able to bear emotional stress than Dorothy Wordsworth. She was less hardy physically but more creative. When her first love-affair turned out tragically she shut herself up as if she had been a hermit. Her poetry

however which was not published till after her death, shows that she remained till the end of her life a creature of wild, strong feeling, and that years of deliberate isolation never made the flame of her inner life or her sympathy burn any the less bright. Here again is an instance of a type, but carried to the farthest limits possible to a sane human being.

A psychiatrist might call Mrs. Trollope an Extrovert and Dorothy and Emily Introverts, for the first sought company, action, and bustle, while the other two loved solitude. But, as they warn us, real live human beings cannot be satisfactorily shut up into these categories. These brilliant introverts differed for instance in their degree of creativeness. Again these three, though they were so different, had one quality in common. They were not managing women, that is they were not reformers. Though they were all three good observers they were also in a sense spectators, for they seldom apparently felt any strong impulse to control or alter the people or things that they observed.

IV

Now look at a young woman—in many ways very charming—who did feel the impulse to control other people. Jane Austen, in her portrait of *Emma* has drawn an affectionate full-length picture of one of the managing sort and shows us a young woman of this kind very much as she may be seen among us today, especially if she happens to grow up in a quiet setting, and has a prosperous life.

Emma Woodhouse, her mother being dead, had, since the age of eighteen, been the Lady of her Father's house, and he (an amiable old gentleman who was afraid of draughts and indigestion) had always admired and approved everything that his handsome daughter did.

When the novel opens, she is about twenty-six, and we see her going her way, serenely kind, but always sure that she knows best, and equally sure that she understands her own motives. Emma develops a taste for match-making and—in general—for managing other people's affairs and, being so sure of herself, is completely taken in by two variously undesirable young men. She misjudges her own and their motives and also the real feelings of pretty, easily influenced young Harriet Smith, whom she unfortunately takes under her wing. At last however Emma's real good nature, and the influence of a number of sensible people who love her, retrieve what might have been a series of disastrous situations. At the end of the book we feel that Emma herself is going to become much less bossy, she will grow and sweeten, and will become not only very fond of her husband, but altogether more mature and thus less sure that she knows best.

Any reader who feels that she belongs among the managing sort but who is not too far gone to laugh at herself, will enjoy *Emma*.

V

The Emma of the novel did her managing on a small scale. Let us look at a much bolder example.

In real life, Florence Nightingale was a sort of heroic, adventurous Emma, one who also could not endure to sit by and see things go wrong. Even as a young girl she felt that she had something to give the world. But she was the daughter of rich Victorian parents, and these parents, her pretty sister, and the smug people among whom they lived—'The Proper', as she called them—put every possible obstacle in the way of her using her abilities. For years she had to endure tears, ridicule, and disapproval, she had to fight everyone she knew, including those she

loved, for the right to learn and the right to use powers that she knew she possessed and that the world needed. When at last her chance came, she was almost middle-aged and, alas, the softer side of her nature had turned sour in the long fight. Her fear of 'The Proper', her bossiness, and her sense of discipline were by now over-developed. Her legend is that of the compassionate, gentle 'Lady of the Lamp', and she did not like it, for she knew she was not like that. She said in the Crimean War that she had been obliged to become a sort of 'Barrack Mistress'. The awful state of things that she found in the hospitals at Scutari and the General's unending opposition to the reforms planned by 'The Bird', as they nick-named her, hardened and embittered her still further. Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians* rightly denies the legend of the gentle 'Lady with the Lamp', but describes Florence Nightingale as a meddlesome tyrant, a cruel vampire who, seeing only the cause she had at heart, worked other more sensitive people to death, driving them on with the lash of a bitter tongue. He has never a word of compassion for the long years of damaging struggle that she had to live through, and little praise for the courage she showed. Even today we may see fine natures which have been marred as hers was.

VI

The next portrait shows us what sort of person a woman with the character of Florence Nightingale might perhaps have been, if she had been born in a different time, and shows us a woman who might serve as a model to many of those with an active practical bent. Dame Geraldine Cadbury, who died recently, was obviously not as great or as intelligent a woman as Florence Nightingale, but she was a far pleasanter person. She could probably never have

out-faced and done battle with 'The Proper' as Florence Nightingale did, but, luckily for her, she did not have to do so. Geraldine Cadbury managed to give the world, not so much new ideas, as practical samples of what happens if—for example—you behave to delinquent children with kindness and humanity.

She was brought up as a Quaker and was courted early by a very rich man who soon became head of the Cadbury firm, and she was devoted to him and to her children. She took her own education in hand by acting for many years as a magistrate in the then newly established Children's Court in Birmingham and by running a club for mothers. On a basis of what she had learned she established a series of institutions for the care of delinquent, invalid, or backward children, and for families in need of help. As a Quaker she was well aware of the importance of character and of knowing her own hidden motives. She was not a prig, but when she was young she took her own nature in hand and consciously developed it. Those who worked with her have told me of the delightful impression she made as a middle-aged woman. Her sense of humour and her patience gave her, they say, a glow of warmth.

VII

Geraldine Cadbury's delightful, comfortable quality of warmth and humour sometimes belongs to scholars too, though their chosen work is, unlike hers, solitary. Jane Harrison was such a scholar. She was unworldly, and seemed to care neither for money nor fame, and she was devoted to her subject—the Classics. She made it her business to dive into the depths of the most dreary commentators, and of obscure Greek texts, and she usually managed to emerge into daylight with something delight-

ful. The origin of Greek plays and legends, of religious ritual and its relations to art, were her chief subjects, and she went after them with intense delight at every new discovery that she made. I was fortunate enough to know her a little and can testify that she, like Dame Geraldine, really had this warmth. An acquaintance felt that here was a woman who had a life which satisfied her. She seemed, too, to know how to get the best results from her energies:

"I never work in the sense of attacking a subject against the grain, tooth and nail. The kingdom of heaven, from me, 'suffereth no violence'."

She loved to study languages and said that in a comparative study of them you could find wisdom:

"The Russian verb 'to learn' comes . . . from the same root as 'to get used to'. When you learn, you 'get yourself used to' a thing. To know that is worth a whole treatise of pedagogy."

A fellow professor teasingly accused Jane Harrison of making her discoveries without ever doing any hard work, and with her usual good humour she defends her methods:

"One reads round a subject, soaks oneself in it, and then something stirs and ferments, swims up into your consciousness, and you know you have to write a book. That may not be 'hard work', but let me tell Professor Murray it is painfully and pleasantly like it in its results; it leaves you spent, washed out, a rag, but an exultant rag."

It is said that women either never know when to stop or else that they do not know how or when to put out that last ounce of energy. If you are a 'career woman' you might

learn something interesting by a study of her way of working.

VIII

There are many men and women who have Jane Harrison's intense delight in learning something new. They are not all scholars in her sense; today, many of them are Research Scientists of various sorts. One, a woman, who has left us her own full-length portrait, combined some of the qualities both of Jane Harrison and Florence Nightingale, and also some of those often possessed by the younger scientists. She was a pioneer in applying the methods of science in a new field.

Mrs. Sidney Webb—the daughter of a rich man—observed, just as Florence Nightingale did, that there were a great many things about the way in which the world was run that seemed to need putting right. She was specially concerned with the problem of Poverty. But, unlike Florence Nightingale or Dame Geraldine, Mrs. Webb was not impelled immediately to rush off to do something practical. She and her husband considered, just as the scientist usually does, that before anything useful could be done it was necessary to know a great deal more. What was unusual was what they studied. They chose such apparently dreary things as the history of Local Government, the Conditions of Employment in this or that trade, and the history of the Trade Union Movement. With the passion of true scientists, these two set themselves to the task of research in these new fields and, like Jane Harrison, they also contrived to fish up, out of what seemed dreary and muddy, a large collection, not only of important but often of delightful facts. They were pioneers, and they worked out a technique of research which other sociologists could, and did, use and improve on.

Mrs. Sidney Webb was, among other things, a fine example of the sort of human being who doesn't fit into any psychological 'type'. You could not call her either Introvert or Extrovert, nor indeed does she fit into any of the categories that we think of in everyday life. She was not exactly a historian, a scholar, or a scientist, and not exactly a practical woman. I was going to add that she was also not an artist for she was rather noticeably oblivious of most forms of art. Yet there are delightful passages in *My Apprenticeship* and a few in a text-book on local government called *The King's Highway* that make me feel not quite sure that that is true.

She had her faults, of course, for she was very much alive. She could be unscrupulous, and she sometimes very much enjoyed setting the cat among the pigeons. Let her stand in this little gallery of miniatures as a sample of the rich complexity of real human nature, and let me add that, both as a girl and as an old woman, she was strikingly beautiful. Only an artist, either in words or paint, could draw a true portrait of her. Her character and her way of working are worth study by those who have a practical or scientific bent and who yet feel somehow uneasy at the idea of working in the way which is usual in a particular field. If you are one of those who feel that in your particular department of knowledge the practical people may be working along the wrong lines, you may, after all, be perfectly right, just as she was. But study her work and the mountains of labour that it involved, for the way of the pioneer is not always easy.

IX

We have suggested that only an artist could draw Mrs. Webb's portrait.

Only an artist can, as I believe, draw a true picture of any real human being. If your work or your present way of looking at things does not satisfy you, it may be that you do not allow some element of the artist in you enough scope?

Of artists we have so far said little, only instancing two. One was Dorothy Wordsworth, but she was, like the majority of people with an artistic side to them, only one half of an artist. It is possible that the reader is such a person. Dorothy Wordsworth had, in an extraordinary degree, the power of observation possessed by every artist, but she only passed on what she saw to her poet brother or to a private journal that she kept. She left it to the poet to give what she saw its true expression. She was not, or possibly she did not choose to be, creative, as the complete artist is.

The other artist already spoken of was that strange recluse and poet, Emily Dickinson.

There are, and have been, many artists, both men and women, who have had the retiring nature of those two, but 'the artistic temperament' is, as we know, something much wider. In many of the arts, a shrinking nature and the want of protective shell which we noticed in them makes full development impossible. The whole throng of actresses, singer and musicians are there to witness to this. Let us glance at a few of these people, for maybe it is among them that the reader may find a picture that turns out to be partly a looking-glass.

X

Sarah Bernhardt was one of the greatest of actresses. She had a nervous, passionate nature, and a ruthless indifference to those who stood in her way. She hated, she loved, she believed in herself, she produced herself magni-

ficently. She had the power of absorbing the feelings that some playwright wanted to express, and of giving them out again in a way that electrified her audiences. The playwrights' situations were heightened often beyond what they had dreamed of by her golden voice, her magnificent gestures, or even by the rigid stillness of her body. Her faults of character were very obvious. She was erratic, vain, egotistical, and jealous. Among her virtues, however, were some that are possessed by every successful artist, she was minutely observant, a tremendously hard worker, a painstaking, persistent craftsman, and above all she had immense gusto. All actors and actresses have not had her faults. The great Sarah Siddons must, for example, have been a much nicer woman, but all great stage artists have had Sarah Bernhardt's virtues.

XI

Here is another woman artist in an entirely different field who has these artistic virtues clearly developed—this passion for life, this willingness to work hard, this patient interest in a craft, Dame Laura Knight, the painter. In her autobiography, her gusto, her energy, her craftsman's sense, her curiosity and her power of minute observation come out plainly—more clearly perhaps than in her painting. She has worked immensely hard since the age of fourteen, she has doggedly come back to her work in spite of every kind of failure and setback, she has always wanted to know about the things she looked at, she has always wanted to make a workmanlike job. Like the stage artist, she likes crowds, bustle and human drama.

XII

It seems that creative artists may be lions or lambs, they may work in spasms, or be as regular as bank clerks,

they may shrink from crowds and fuss, or on the other hand be unable to live without them. But they have two things in common. They all find delight, interest, or a sort of irritated passion in listening and seeing, and they cannot easily be prevented from trying to tell what it is that they have seen. This may be funny, tragic or serene, or, with the very greatest, all these things together and many more.

Their temperament is not the same as that of half artists like Dorothy Wordsworth, still less is it that of those who enjoy works of art. Many people who enjoy the arts suppose that they are artists. Sincere artist-craftsmen are prophets, they proclaim the truths that they see, and their special technique for doing this is their medium. A great ballet-dancer, Karsavina, a master of her craft, put this point—the 'what' and the 'how' of the creative artist—in reply to a newspaper reporter: 'What,' said the reporter, 'do you mean by this new dance, Madame Karsavina?'—'If I could tell you that in a sentence, do you think that I should go to all the trouble of dancing it?' she replied. The art—painting, writing, or dancing—is developed not only because of a craftsman-like love of it, but also because it seems to that particular artist the appropriate, often the only, medium for expressing a particular truth.

There will be more to be said, later, of the great value of learning to enjoy and understand what the artists are trying to tell us. Here the point is that the reader should observe that the person who is thus able to enjoy and learn is not necessarily an artist who has never had a chance.

XIII

So far all our portraits have been of women. This has been by chance not design. Ibsen, the great dramatist,

drew a portrait of a man, whom the reader would do well to study, chiefly—like the picture of Florence Nightingale—as an example of the way in which a certain kind of temperament can go wrong.

Parson Brand was a stern Puritan who saw clearly the evils of inconstancy, and the humiliations of our mixed nature. He vows that he will rise superior to human frailty, he devotes his life to ministering to the most wretched, he casts in his lot with the most benighted, he determines never to spare himself or think of himself, and his watch-word is 'all or nothing'. He never examines his own motives, either in making the sacrifices that he himself offers to his ideal, or in those that he demands of others; for he is sure that his motives are pure. They are pure. His nature is as pure as ice, as pure as fire, and as incapable of nourishing life. But Brand is never absurd, his ideals are magnificent, his tragedy is a noble one, and we shudder as Ibsen shows it to us.

XIV

Let us set the picture of a woman beside that of Brand, a real woman, not a character out of fiction. Mrs. Ruskin, the mother of the famous John Ruskin, was a woman with something of the same 'all or nothing' character as Brand—self-controlled, self-sacrificing, unbending. She was very differently situated to Brand, for she was not a poor minister of the gospel but the wife of a rich sherry-merchant in mid-Victorian England. She made her little boy John learn pages of the Bible by heart, she brought him up to tell the truth, she would have cut off her right hand to save him from a blister, but, like Parson Brand, she could trust no one. John had, she felt, a fatal mixture in him of human weakness. But she was strong! She and his good kind father would be his protection against all the ills and temptations

of life. When he went to the University they took lodgings nearby to watch over his health and to see that he should not get into bad ways, she cherished him, she took thought for him, she tried to be his conscience, and to a great extent she succeeded, for he was never guilty of a consciously mean or bad action. Yet, though her son was extremely gifted, sensitive and intelligent, she wrecked his life, so that his marriage was an utter failure and her brilliant son died a nervous wreck, more than half mad. Mrs. Ruskin and Brand, with many noble qualities, may perhaps serve as an awful warning to devoted souls who find a tendency to develop in this way—who find it difficult to believe in the limitations of the Puritan character, and who suspect their own softer impulses.

XV

Another character drawn by Ibsen is Peer Gynt. He is as great a contrast to these noble, disastrous Puritans as it is possible to be, and his portrait may serve to remind readers who know themselves to be of a very different type, of the tragedies that can overcome the gay, the adventurous, and the amusing who do not know where to draw the line, and, more disastrous still, who do not learn to love. Peer likes to talk big, and his talk is so full of imagination that his uncritical mother has always listened to it with pleasure, for he is clever, he is inventive, he has a fine sense of humour. Many people like him because he can both laugh at himself and stand up for himself. But he outlaws himself with a wild exploit—and his bad qualities begin to develop. He is greedy, and his love is shallow and self-seeking. He can, however, go on impressing almost everyone he meets, and learns to puff himself up into a sort of Napoleon. But though he is haunted by regret for his lack of real achievement, and does not, till the very

end, give up his attempts to do better, he finds himself more and more entangled in his own half-truths, frauds, and selfishness. The play is fantastic, a sort of dream, in which we—the audience—see what Peer sees, hear the voices that Peer hears—trolls, trees that sigh and speak eastern scenes, scenes in a madhouse. As this strange play goes on, Peer Gynt's character is peeled like an onion, and we see, at last, that there is nothing in the middle. The play grips us because we feel all the time that Peer's faults are in some sense also our faults and that there must be something of this Peer Gynt in ourselves. Or even if we acquit ourselves of this, we are apt to see something of Peer in someone that we have half, or altogether, loved—just as his mother and his unfortunate sweetheart loved Peer. For he is so attractive, so much alive! But alas he cannot, will not, face reality, he likes to dare every obstacle, but then does not carry through his dare. He is not altogether bad, but, because he lacks sincerity, we know that he will go on trying to talk himself out of anything, that he will snatch a good time or a joke out of every situation, and, though he can be so sympathetic and soothing, and can seem so affectionate, we also see, with a shudder, that in the end he comes not to care for anyone but himself.

It is even easier to find portraits of female equivalents of Peer Gynt than of Parson Brand, for even if we may come to the conclusion that such characters do no more harm in the world than the Puritans, they make a far greater noise and have been far more often portrayed. Half the charmers and adventuresses of today and yesterday were of this kind. They are often half artists—artists without any love of hard work but with all the artist's vanity; they are the professional beauties, 'Show girls', 'Starlets', Stars who are not artists, and Beauty Queens whose hearts are not of gold. Such women often aspire to become the mistresses of kings and dictators, some die rich and many die poor.

We say of such women, when they make a great noise in the world, what was said of Helen of Troy, that they are 'The Hell of cities, the Hell of men.'

Like the Puritans, they are people who, though they may have begun well, lost their balance. Unlike the Puritans they were afraid of deep experience, and were, also unlike them, afraid of hard work. They often make a great show of loving but like the Puritans they lack both real love and real humility, and like the Puritans they are very seldom happy but live to reap disappointment. Do not confuse them with the Nell Gwynns, the jolly, warm-hearted girls. They are not really warm-hearted or jolly.

XVI

Last of all, let us look at two, gentle, affectionate faces, a man's and a woman's. The first is that of a very great man, Michael Faraday, the scientist.

Faraday was extremely unworldly, religious, and intelligent. He never quarrelled with anybody, though he was, in a quiet way, full of dignity and self-respect. He could have made a great deal of money, but said that he 'could not afford to become rich'. To take time from his fundamental scientific researches was, he believed, to waste it. He lived and died (cared for by a wife as gentle and unworldly as himself) in two little rooms in Albemarle Street, in constant contact with worldly, fashionable people. When he lectured on his researches he seemed not so much to be telling his audience of his great discoveries as to be submitting his evidence to them. He was childless, but he loved children and they loved him, and of all the things that he was obliged to do outside his laboratory, only his religious concerns and his lectures to audiences of children seemed to him not to be waste of time.

His special quality was his combination of gentleness and determination.

XVII

The second gentle portrait is an imaginary one, and of a much more everyday person than the great Michael Faraday and it was drawn by Jane Austen.

Ann Elliot is a girl who listens to reason in the person of an affectionate older woman, who persuades her, on apparently sensible grounds, to break off her engagement with a naval officer, who is certainly poor and may very likely be inconstant. Loving and gentle, Ann yields and nearly breaks her heart, while he, with a strong, adventurous nature, cannot understand how, if she loves him, she could be persuaded to give him up, and so feels anger and almost contempt for his lost love. Luckily for her, however, he is never able to forget her, and she, growing braver, learns at last to follow her heart. *Persuasion* is an exquisite portrait of Ann as the conventional 'gentle maiden' who at last, when she has grown to be a woman and only when she has almost given up hope of happiness, learns to trust herself, and to take the sort of risk that we must all take if we are to hope for joy and fulfilment.

XVIII

And now, reader, are you Ann Elliot? Or are you more like vigorous Mrs. Trollope, or like enquiring Mrs. Webb? Or are Parson Brand's faults or Peer Gynt's or Florence Nightingale's those that you fear? You are not exactly like any of them—naturally. But try if you cannot see a trait here or there that is like? Use your imagination if you can, make a sort of mosaic looking-glass out of the qualities in several of these pictures—try to allow for the

differences of time and opportunity. Which of them would you like to be like? Which might you fear to become? You say you cannot tell? Perhaps not. Perhaps this is because there is not enough here for you to go on, for my gallery is, after all, simply a gallery of a few miniatures.

Perhaps you feel they are all too important, too 'great'? Don't be too modest. There are, anyhow, one or two with whom you could make friends, or whom you could have helped.

But still perhaps you object that there isn't enough here to go on, and if so your objection has a good deal in it. But let me remind you again that in your public library, or perhaps on your own bookshelf, there are full-length portraits of these people. But indeed it may be that you really cannot find yourself here, so varied is human nature. But, in other books, there are studies of men and women with many other kinds of character who found themselves in every possible kind of setting. Biographers and novelists have drawn for us a great gallery, not of miniatures, but of solid full-length portraits, and have drawn them in many and most entertaining ways—all these portraits await us. If you like large robust caricatures drawn in a few lines, take down a volume of Dickens—say *Bleak House*—and read about Mrs. Jellaby—the comic awful-warning for women who 'want a fuller life'. Or if you like something strange, yet true to life, read E. M. Forster's *Howard's End* or his *Where Angels Fear to Tread.*

Tolstoy's *War and Peace* alone is a novel that will give you twenty full-length pictures painted to the life—the cramped Princess Mary, the confused Pierre, the fascinating Nastasia, the subtle Prince Andrew, or that fatal selfish enchantress Helene. Biographies and novels by writers with real insight into human character are vital reading for those who seek to understand themselves. You cannot understand yourself unless you set yourself to learn

at least something about many other human beings for, don't forget, all learning—both the scientists' and the artists'—rests mainly on comparing one thing with another, in saying after careful observation of the object studied: 'More like this—less like that'. To understand one human being—even in part—you must know, for purposes of comparison, a good deal about many of these strange creatures. Then, the reader may object, why should we not study the living people about us? Why not indeed—to try to understand them is essential. But you may find that a study of your friends and family is not enough—so much is hidden in the case of living people—it is, for instance, hidden in the future. To study those around you may not be enough. But if you can read English you need never lack material for this fascinating sort of study, for we are rich in the kind of novelist and biographer who can be trusted to be skilled and sincere guides through the labyrinths of human nature.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conversation with a Psychiatrist

THE miniature portraits in the last chapter will, it can be repeated, at least have reminded the reader of the variety of human nature, and this in spite of the fact that none of the portraits were taken from very far away or very long ago, and though they have, with two or three exceptions, been of people who made some sort of a success of their lives. They were each included for a combination of reasons—they had each developed characteristics that stood out fairly clearly, or else they showed different versions of some basic character, and because full-length portraits of each are at hand.

The highly desirable variety of human nature that has been demonstrated has, it is hoped, brought home to the reader the reason why general advice on 'how to be happy' usually seems so silly the moment we begin to think about it or to try to apply it to a real person. You yourself would so obviously not say the same sort of thing to Mrs. Trollope as to Ann Elliot, to Sarah Bernhardt as to Jane Harrison if they had happened to ask your advice.

And yet, the idea that there might be some general directions on the subject of how to be good and how to be happy, is everlastingly attractive to us all. Is there even one single thing that all these people and you and I ought to have?

With this in mind I showed my little miniatures to a very experienced friend of mine, whom we will call Dr. Klaris Harley. Is there, I asked, anything useful that

could be said to all of us—to all these exceedingly different people and also to you and me living in the world of today? I have already quoted something of what she answered.

She said that everyone, without exception, at every stage from childhood to old age, needs what she calls 'some give-and-take with life'. What is to be given and what accepted will vary, but she believes that a fundamental fact is that people who try to do either all the giving or all the taking are equally likely to be unhappy and therefore unbalanced, and therefore unsuccessful in whatever it is they want to do.

Her opinion is worth having because she is a psychiatrist—a physician who specialises in treating many kinds of psychological ills and she therefore knows a great deal about what can go wrong with people with many kinds of nature. Because they are in some sort of desperate difficulty her patients make a great effort to show her their hidden feelings, and they try their best, not just to tell her what is troubling them, but to give her a true picture of themselves.

"Men and women come to me suffering from all sorts of complaints. Their digestions have gone wrong or they can't sleep, or they can't concentrate, or in one way or another they've lost the knack of living happily. There does seem to be one thing wrong with all of them, so I conclude that it's something that all human beings need but that they—for the moment—have lost. It's some power which the well-balanced person has. This power seems to have to do with keeping up an interchange with life, the power of give-and-take.

"These different people whom you instanced in those character sketches—those who produced something worth while, or who were happy, all had it. In one way or another, all happy people have it. To be thoroughly alive

we must be able to give and to take, just as we need to breathe in and to breathe out.

"What must be given and accepted? That will vary, but as well as these needs every human being needs to be able both to give and to take love. Most people (as your little portraits show) need other things as well—they may perhaps need both to learn and to teach, or they need to experiment in some field, or to take in beauty and then give it out in the form of some sort of work of art. There are no end of ways. But they also need to give and take love and affection."

II

Now the sort of morality that is mostly taught us in this country is a Puritan morality, and I suspect, dear reader, that you and I would not be reading or writing this book unless we had ourselves been strongly influenced by this teaching. When it comes to giving and taking, what are the difficulties that may arise from our efforts to live up to the kind of ideals that we were first taught? This Puritan tradition puts a great deal of stress on the perfectly real duty of giving, but very little on the rightness of being ready to take. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' is a text often quoted—especially to women. Another saying of Christ's, however, is much less often brought forward—it is: 'I came that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly.' I told Dr. Klaris of one or two of the Puritan letters I had got after the broadcasts in 'Women's Hour'. Here is a sample:

"Do you not believe that 'He who loveth his life shall lose it' is quite literally true in this world? Meaning that there are no more frustrated people on earth than the self-seekers—such as you are advising us to become.

"If you want, for some reason, to get us outside our homes I think focus should be on what we can do for the community—not on what we can get out of it."

'But, if you are right, Klaris, about this give and take,' I went on, 'this widely held idea that being ready to give is so much more important than being ready to take, might be good advice for the Peer Gynt type of character, but might be dangerous to any of us who happen to be of the Parson Brand-Mrs. Ruskin type, and also dangerous to those of us who are gentle and easily persuaded like Ann Elliot? What the writer of this letter says seems to me worth discussing because so many of us who are women,' I went on, 'feel as though there is a sort of voice that speaks to us—it is a voice that we often believe to be the voice of conscience, and it is a voice of which we are nearly always a little afraid: "Do your Duty," says the voice. "Do you vainly imagine that here on earth any of us will find happiness except by resolutely treading the hard path of Duty? Seek happiness and it flies. Courage is what we need, and a sense of duty well done is our only reward." What is this voice? Do you think that it is, as I said, the voice of conscience?'

'Are you sure it isn't the voice of despair?' she answered, and added rather dryly that she didn't see, anyhow, that that sort of advice was likely to help any woman to build a happy home. I repeated that, all the same, I thought that a great many women, especially the mothers of families, do in fact find it much easier to give than to receive. She pounced on that and said:

'Easier it may be, but I doubt if it's more blessed!'

She seemed so convinced of the need for happiness, especially for the woman at home, that I asked her to enlarge on that point. Her experience suggested, she went on, that happiness is a vital need like air and sunshine,

and that, like air and sunshine, it was especially necessary to children:

"If a child doesn't get enough happiness, it doesn't learn to trust itself or anybody else, and so it never learns this giving and taking. Don't forget though, this is necessary at all ages. I've had patients, both men and women, who, as children, had suffered very much because their mothers had refused to be helped. They would sacrifice themselves to their children without letting the children do anything in return. Almost driving them into being selfish little beasts! Children don't know exactly what is happening, of course, but they feel that something is wrong and that, somehow, they are being made to behave wrongly. They end by hating their self-sacrificing mothers. Husbands can feel like that too. It's no joke having a human sacrifice in a home!"

I asked her why she thought women get into that particular way of behaving?

She thought it was partly current public opinion and partly what I had called 'the Puritan Voice', and that once a woman believes too simply and unthinkingly in the duty of self-sacrifice—as Mrs. Ruskin did—then a vicious circle starts.

"Women who set out only to give and never to receive become warped without knowing it. What have you got to give if you're empty yourself or grudging and bitter because you're starving or dried up like a squeezed lemon from forcing yourself to give and give? You become so full of resentment that, try as you will, you will take it out by giving just the wrong thing. A woman who sets off like that won't be able to do her real duty as a woman—the duty of increasing the happiness of those about her. A woman must keep an eye on her own life. She must try to stay human and not let herself be destroyed. If it's right

to be kind to other people, then it's right to try to be kind to yourself."

She meant, I thought, as well, that there is a kind of arrogance in pretending to need nothing for yourself.

One day Dr. Klaris told me a story, which I have never forgotten, of a woman who had taken no thought for herself:

"I once had a patient who lived in a top flat alone all day. She had a baby who was always crying. She kept scrubbing and polishing and only went out to do the shopping. One day when she came back she found that she just could not force herself to walk up the stairs to her flat. She had to drag herself up on her hands and knees. She wasn't physically ill, but the truth was (though she wouldn't admit it for a long time) that she so hated going back to her home that her legs wouldn't carry her there. She had let things go too far with self-sacrifice! You can imagine what sort of a life it was for the baby.

"The husband came to see me, and told me that she wouldn't let him help. She felt it was all no use, for she'd let herself get so half dead that she couldn't enjoy anything. I wish he had come to me earlier."

I asked her why she thought that so many of the Parson Brand-Mrs. Ruskin kind so often refuse help, and I told her about the group of women who had wanted to abolish Sunday dinner and who had also said that their husbands would be no use in freeing them occasionally from domestic tasks 'Because men are too clumsy to be trusted about the house'.

'We all know perfectly well in our heart of hearts that men are not really more clumsy than women—they could not do the work that we all know they do if they were.'

She thought that people of strong character—both men

and women—have two quite usual ways of making a mess of this side of their relations with other people:

"Either they grab, which doesn't give the other person a chance, or else they refuse what is offered them. After a time, if they can't bring themselves to take as well as to give, they themselves are so starving that they daren't trust themselves. They become afraid, they imagine that if they stopped declaring that they were all right and didn't need any help, they might collapse altogether, and become helpless and dependent just because their need is really so great."

The very real difficulty of keeping a balance between the two tendencies was summed up by John Ruskin in a letter to a friend, written at a time when he was first beginning to doubt the wisdom of taking his parents' code as his own.

"Whenever I work selfishly—buy pictures that I like, stay in places that I like, study what I like, and so on—I am happy and well; but when I deny myself, and give all my money away, and work at what seems useful, I get miserable and unwell. The things I most regret in all my past life are great pieces of virtuous and quite heroical self-denial, which have issued in all kinds of catastrophe and disappointment, instead of victory. Everything that has turned out well I've done merely to please myself, and it upsets all one's moral principles. Mine are going I don't know where."

John Ruskin remained—it should be added—a moralist to the end of his life and struggled hard to find—for his guidance and ours—fresh moral principles of a richer, happier kind. But, alas, the early Puritan code had cramped him too sternly and he remained too sure that he was a teacher ever to be a good learner in the things that concern conduct and feeling.

III

I have sometimes talked to Dr. Klaris about the people who have the opposite kind of fault—the Peer Gynts and worse, the self-indulgent half-artists, the good-timers who let themselves become insincere, cold, selfish, and greedy.

We respectable ones steer clear of such people and mostly know them by hearsay. They are the race-track gangs, the spivs and their molls, and they spend much time on high stools in low bars. Unfortunately there is, as we know from the law courts and the films, a whole underworld of such people—slick men and flashy girls, a world where dog eats dog, and where there is not much honour, even among thieves. That is the sort of obvious evil that moralists mostly try to combat, the sort of evil of which we know we are afraid.

What are the consequences to the children of parents who have these two opposite character-faults—the over self-indulgent and the puritanical? The question has a direct bearing not only on how we should try to act now—if we happen to be home-makers—but also on our effort to understand ourselves, for we were each of us once children. Though no doubt the reader's own home was pretty well balanced and did not fall into either disastrous extreme, yet extreme cases may help to throw some light on early, half-forgotten influences. Our own homes—we can say to ourselves—were, thank goodness, not like these, they were far more mixed, that is far more balanced, yet on the whole the balance did incline perhaps a little to the selfish or the unselfish, the tight-laced or the casual, showed a slight slant towards grabbing or renouncing.

The 'immoral' greedy homes, from which so many spivs and law-breakers come, have been, Dr. Klaris says, homes where there has not been this balance.

It is often said, however, by the cynical, that 'delin-

quents' chiefly come from over-respectable, severe homes. Though such homes do regularly produce a quota of 'problem children' this common saying seems not to be quite fair. Just as often, so the experts say, the homes of the failures or of criminals turn out to have been homes that have failed on the other side. Law-breakers really do often come from 'bad homes' in which the children have learned to think of grabbing and cunning as the natural thing, and have learned to think of pampering yourself at other people's expense as the height of pleasure. The psychiatrists believe that both the too-moral and the standardless, immoral home, equally deprive the child of love and of the give-and-take that they have learned to see as so important.

It works, they suggest, like this: in both cases the child will (as all children do) try at first to imitate its parents. But in both cases, if it does, it will find disappointment and dissatisfaction. The strictness of the over-respectable home stifles and repels the child who seeks happiness very much as a plant leans towards the light. So, knowing no better, the child who has been disappointed then goes to the other extreme, and breaks out in resentment against everything. On the other hand, the child of selfish, pleasure-grabbing parents also does not find happiness at home, or the love, joy and security that it needs, and so this child too becomes hating and, alas, hateful. With this sort of disappointment and hate, there always goes fear, making the picture still darker.

Another psychiatrist, this time a man who is head of a Child Guidance Clinic, who, with his staff, is often asked to deal with delinquent children, sometimes talks to me about his ideas of how law-breakers are made, and in the main his ideas agree with Dr. Klaris's.

Two things chiefly worry him in his daily work. One is that he too seldom gets his cases before the child has

broken out in some way—that is, he does not get it before the unfortunate child has become really hating, and therefore hateful, and therefore desperately frightened. The other is that so much of the legal action taken when the child has broken out—the appearance before magistrates, the Remand Homes, and so on—tend to make most types of child worse instead of better. This is, he believes, also a danger when a child is severely punished at home. The vigorous child, when it feels that those around it are against it, may easily come to feel—and sometimes rightly—that the grown-ups are treating it unjustly. When this happens, its whole intense will-to-live, its whole instinct of self-preservation, its very fear and sense of guilt, make it want to hit out.

The less vigorous child who is punished becomes timid, afraid, and bewildered. If the trouble has gone far and if it comes to the Clinic, such a child usually behaves as if the love of life had been knocked out of it. Less of a nuisance to society, such a child seems to this psychiatrist even more tragic, and even less likely, later, to be able to contribute a full human quota to the general well-being. John Ruskin's was, on the whole, of this frightened, bewildered type of reaction. But though his own private life was wrecked he did manage to do a great deal in his public life.

Such seem, then, to be the consequences to our children of two opposite kinds of character fault in their parents.

Yet we all, to some extent, err either on one side or the other. What, if we are parents, are we to do?

What, for instance, are we to do about the selfish, self-indulgent, and self-pampering impulses that we all feel at times and which, carried too far, wreck many lives?

What we have to remember is that to try to be all 'take' is to be just as unhappy as to try to be all 'give'. Both extremes of selfishness and unselfishness are in fact short-

sighted. Though either may seem successful in the short run, few of us have natures that can stand either of them for long without degenerating.

There have been innumerable studies of self-indulgent types. Rebecca West, for example, in her realistic novel *The Thinking Reed* gives a good common-sense study of the characters of a set of rich people who have gone in for too much pleasure-grabbing. She shows them as neurotic and exceedingly unhappy. With all the outward trappings of 'a good time', with all the flattery that money can buy, they are anxious, hurried, and competitive.

Graham Greene in his thriller *Brighton Rock* (which was successfully filmed) shows the consequences of the same kind of behaviour among the same sort of people if they have less money. These are both true pictures of types of people who are, unfortunately, always with us, the 'Don Juans', the gamblers, the desperate seekers after this famous 'good time'. The psychiatrists see these people as men and women who—like the extreme sort of Puritan—are starving for love and security. After a while the self-indulgent begin to eat dirt instead of the food they need. If they never learn to give love or to give warm human feeling, they can never receive it. Cheated and cheating, they steal love, and, not uncommonly, they steal money.

The tragedy of this was put in one short compassionate sentence—not by a modern psychiatrist, but centuries ago by St. Teresa: 'How I pity Satan,' said St. Teresa, 'for he can never love anybody!'

So there they stand—on either side of the way—ready to wreck us: the cold iceberg of puritanism, and 'Brighton Rock'.

The difficulties of setting the right course for ourselves and our children sometimes sound formidable!

I asked my psychiatrist friend, Dr. Klaris, whether she had ever considered an idea that has been held by many

people that 'the home', as we know it, is so difficult to run properly, that it is reckless to encourage people to try, that therefore it had better be abolished and that the sooner children were brought up by experts the better.

Her reply was emphatic: those who have said we could do without homes just spoke out of disappointment or even despair, and that the home was one of the best things that our civilisations had evolved.

"Homeless people are lonely people, we all need somewhere where we belong, and where what we do is needed and counts. Homes are absolutely necessary—but women mustn't let the walls of their homes turn into prison walls, or their husbands and children will feel imprisoned too."

Anything but a home, she went on, is too big and impersonal for the little child, or indeed for us grown-up people at the times when we need rest, help, comfort, and protection, or when we want to enjoy to the full the more permanent blessings of our emotional lives. May I add that I cordially agree with her.

IV

The psychiatrists have spoken of the Puritans and of the over self-indulgent. What are the needs of the adventurous, happy-go-lucky type of character? Consider the Land Girl and Miss McFarlane, for instance, spoken of in Chapter Three. What are they to do if, at the moment, they really do feel shut up in a job or a home and feel they are not having enough of the give and take with life that Dr. Klaris thinks so important?

The answer lies perhaps along the lines of the balance that has been spoken of. Adventurous people also need some security and can often feel satisfied during humdrum

spells if they have adventure to look back to and if they feel that they have a right to look forward once more, when responsibilities slacken, to a time of change and variety. They should have the courage of their adventurousness, and recognise that it is a good quality. For most of us who are women, adventure is in short supply, and in any case it cuts across other needs of our natures. All the same, women who feel the impulse should try to satisfy their very proper craving whenever they decently can! For instance, a woman with such a nature can keep going if, as a girl, she has had a share of a roving life (like Miss McFarlane, the ship's stewardess, or like many young women scientists), and if she can look forward to taking up something less humdrum again when her family cares, or her need to earn in a steady job, have become less. We shall discuss later what practical steps she will need to take in the meantime if she is to hope to make this looking forward more than a day-dream.

V

To the scholars who love to learn something new, to the half-artists or the creative artists (who hunger both to observe and create), to the sociable women who find themselves frustrated in their present everyday lives, and who all feel that something in them may shrink and wither, if they go on as they are, I would offer, most sympathetically, the same sort of counsel.

Recognise and value the actual or potential artist, or scholar, or social being in yourself. Tell yourself the truth. The truth is that this hunger for a special sort of give and take is valuable and perfectly real. Your talents can and will develop and mature, even in the most outwardly difficult circumstances, if you will take trouble with them, and if you will value them for their own sakes.

This attempt to value such gifts for their own sakes is very important, but in our particular sort of community not particularly easy. Suppose you are one of the people who feel they have artistic gifts in the field of literature, but who also feel they have no outlet.

Because I am a writer, people often send me essays, stories, and poems. The letter that comes with the manuscript is usually contradictory and says (*a*) that the story enclosed is not much good, but (*b*) implies that if only it could be published the writer might ultimately become rich or famous.

These writers, that is to say, don't so much value their talent for writing for its own sake, as because they hope it will bring them something from outside. They are really seeking the praise or money which their gift might bring them—if only . . .

They are in fact unwilling to use their gift in the way it can always be used (of which more later), and they want it to bring them something else.

This same picture of a gift from which something extra is hoped can be seen in the case of the other arts, such as acting and painting, or so I believe, though giving advice on such things doesn't come my way. The realistic answer is this. In the first place the amateur is very likely a half-artist, with high powers of observation but without much of the creative gift.

In any case, the more genuine the talent or the ability may be, the more the talented or able person should value it for its own sake, and for the way in which it can enrich her own life if she will take it seriously and give it the care and attention, time and trouble that such a possession deserves. The same thing is true of a love of scholarship or of science. But the sad fact is that such a disinterested, uncomplicated attitude is not easy, for we are competitive creatures and we live in a world too much obsessed by the

values of the market-place. So, for us, it is human and traditional to feel disappointed if an ability or talent that we know we possess does not also give us fame and money.

The same sort of thing is true of the talent for sociability or for friendship that some people possess. There really is such a talent and, like every other special ability, it is certain, if cultivated, to enrich its owner's life and that of those about her.

But social gifts are often cultivated, not for themselves, but for something different, something outside. The snob or the social climber uses such a talent to get into the social group immediately above her own. Her gifts can be used unscrupulously and most unkindly, as a weapon of offence, for snobs and climbers often like to hurt other people by snubbing and exclusiveness. Some people also use them defensively as a make-weight for a feeling of insecurity—use them, that is, to show off. Valued for their own sake, and used, so to say, affectionately, talents for friendship and sociability are among the best of all, and can give true happiness to their fortunate possessors and to all those around her.

VI

What are the special difficulties of the last type of those whose miniatures were hung in the portrait gallery—the gentle, reflective, affectionate characters,—the Ann Elliots of this world?

Their trouble is that their yielding natures may make them apt not to value their own virtues enough. If you are like Ann Elliot, you have a great deal of love to give, and you must value and respect this quality in yourself and not let yourself be too much pushed about and persuaded by other people; you must try to get used to taking a firm and gentle stand when it is necessary. Such natures can

often show great courage—usually when it comes to protecting people weaker than themselves. In the spring, on the Welsh mountains among which I write, you may often see a ewe with a lamb turn round on a dog and stamp her foot at him. At any other time she would run away frightened.

This was the kind of courage that the gentle Michael Faraday showed. He was remarkably firm with people who tried to exploit him, he had to protect something that was revealed, later, as being of the greatest value to the world —his scientific genius. But, in any case, his self-respecting courage would have been justified. He was gentle, he was retiring, he was unworldly, and he would always do for other people what they were justified in asking him to do. Beyond that point he stood firm. Consider what a much happier world it would be for us, how much less temptation there would be for the managing sort, if gentle, loving people were always encouraged to cultivate this firmness and if they mildly refused to allow themselves to be put upon.

Courage is not put very high in the list of virtues that our society demands of women, but in this I believe Public Opinion is short-sighted.

VII

One last word needs to be said about the variety in human nature, the differences, bold or subtle, that we have observed. People often make the mistake of trying to *change* their own or each other's characters. The psychiatrists are right in insisting that this is not what should be aimed at. We shall each get on much better if we try to develop the character and cultivate the talents that we already have. How various these may be has already

emerged, and I hope to convince the reader farther on that one of the dangers of our present-day society is a danger that we may all try to force ourselves to become too much alike.

Never forget, then, in judging yourself or anybody else, that there is not one kind of excellence, but many kinds. No doubt, if we were preparing ourselves to live on a desert island, it would be necessary to try to be everything at once; but, as we are probably aiming at a life spent with many other people about us, it is merely tiring and unnecessary to strive to fit ourselves to act all the parts in the play. It is also comforting to remember that you and I and every other individual will necessarily have what the French call 'the drawbacks of our good qualities'. Decide what your good qualities are, and then, tolerantly but watchfully, allow for and guard against the drawbacks.

This sort of watchful tolerance is just as useful in little things as in great. Perhaps, for instance, you have the nice little virtues of punctuality and tidiness? Then allow for the fact that you are probably also a little over-anxious about detail and probably fuss slightly.

If, on the other hand, you have the opposite nice little virtue of not fussing and of making the best of things, allow for the fact that you are also probably not very exact.

If you will face your shortcomings, will cheerfully admit that you have a few, and will proceed to find out what they are and thus do not force yourself all the time against the grain, you will not find that your faults will grow on you. On the contrary, on special occasions, you will probably find that you can overcome them. You may, for instance, suddenly find that you need no longer worry half the fun out of starting for a family holiday by being over anxious and fussing; or, at the other extreme, you may find that without too much effort you can cease for a time to be so

easy-going and inexact as to get nightmares about having damaged the baby by forgetting to read the directions on a bottle of medicine.

By having spotted your own weak sides and by having forgiven yourself for having 'the drawbacks of your good qualities' you may also achieve one other important thing. You may find it easier to allow other people to help you, and easier to give them genuine gratitude for doing it.

CHAPTER NINE

What's Short in My Diet?

WE have seen that different types of character may each need something different if their lives are to be made more satisfactory; but a psychiatrist has been our authority for believing that all human beings have a basic need for give and take.

The reader who finds herself with what appears to be an unsatisfied need, has by now perhaps made a guess at what it is for which she hungers. She will at any rate have got some light on it if she has made out those lists, and if she has amused herself by further study of one or two of the characters that seemed to be a little like her own, and also if she has thought out and applied to herself some of the things that the psychiatrists had to say.

II

Something was said briefly at the end of the last chapter about two kinds of 'diet deficiency' that seem fairly common among women. We tend not to get much change, risk, and adventure.

Only during the war was our natural love of adventure fed on a big scale, yet such love comes natural to many women, and has often been given free play, with great success, by such explorers and travellers as Gertrude Bell and Mary Kingsley. Adventure is enjoyed today by many specially qualified women such as scientists who do 'field work'. But it is, as was said, obviously most difficult for a

woman with family responsibilities to satisfy this particular hunger. The suggestion in the last chapter was that humdrum periods can be endured by most balanced women if they have had adventure when young, and if something less humdrum can be prepared for in the future when responsibilities are no longer so pressing, and we noted that it would be necessary to come back to discuss the practical steps to be taken in the routine period that lies between.

III

Some women find that their 'diet deficiency' is not a lack of practical adventure but that they feel cut off from the adventures of the mind. They hunger for more learning and study or for more artistic experience. I have already briefly suggested that this hunger can and should often be satisfied by trying to pursue an art for its own sake, and not for things outside, such as fame or money. This may seem a hard saying. The indignant reader may feel that I am suggesting that a talent is to be rendered useless and that the community is to be deprived. That is not what I mean.

Though in the last chapter only the personal side of all this was spoken of, it has an important public side. All practising artists will agree with me that if only the readers of books, the cinema and television audiences, the listeners to wireless or concerts, the buyers of pictures and of such things as pottery and textiles, if only these consumers would take their jobs seriously, the artistic level of the whole country would immediately soar. But more of that in the next chapter, when we shall hope to gain another vantage point from which we shall see some of our problems more clearly.

IV

Some 'diet deficiencies' are a lack of important things that, unlike adventure or the arts, depend neither altogether on ourselves nor on the community, but first of all on the attitude of those of our nearest and dearest on whom we should be able to depend for an interchange of warm, personal love. The most important of these people on whom we may depend for love is a husband whom we ourselves love. Your husband's attitude to you will partly depend, of course, on your attitude to him. But that is not the whole story.

If you happen to be thinking of marrying a Don Juan or a Peer Gynt, for heaven's sake think again. You are most unlikely to be able to help him—as you no doubt plan to do. If you have, alas, already done just that, there really is very little you can do about making things better for yourself except through your children.

A Don Juan may have made you love him, but he is too unbalanced to be able to give you love in return and it is because of this that you are unlikely to be able to help him. Except in the flare-up of passion, he is cold, sneering, and unloving. He is, we may say with St. Teresa, 'the very devil', the being whom she, in her saintly charity, pitied. It is not hard or cruel of you to avoid him, for such a being cannot be warmed for long by your love, and he is unable to give you love in return, and he will therefore starve you if he does nothing worse.

Luckily most of us have not finally fallen for Don Juans but find ourselves married to ordinary human men, who, though they have faults (as we have), are able both to give and receive love. If love is what is short in your diet, have a look at your own conduct, your own little ways, and a very extra look at any motives you can find lurking behind what you do and say.

Is it possible that—sometimes, anyhow—you cook nicely or even dress nicely for your husband in order to put yourself in the right and to give him no reasonable cause of complaint? Consider if this is so, it's not surprising if you don't get love back when you yourself only behave decently just in order to put the poor man in the wrong.

Either a husband or a wife, even if deep down they love each other, quite easily slip into that deadly freezing attitude. If that is what you find you have begun to do, for heaven's sake turn over a new leaf, for you'll not get love if what you are giving is a cold sham, for love can die of cold.

But how? How are you to do better? That *is* how you feel, you say? Love cannot be forced, you add. Well, I said earlier that any talent you have, any artistic gleam in your nature, any spark of that sort can be of service in enriching your life. If you have a spark of talent, now is the time to use it.

What you must use here is your imagination. This man whom you feel you cannot love was once a child; he hoped, just as you hoped, for happiness. This and that went right, this and that went wrong, and he had his hopes and his disappointments, his work and his pleasures, and the upshot of all this long history was that he married you.

And then?

You have, I hope, just analysed your own feelings about the problems of every-day life, about work and play and have got some ideas of what are the deeper satisfactions. Now try the same analysis on his problems. If you two have not been very friendly lately, you'll make him self-conscious if you ask questions. Watch him, put yourself in his place, try to see what it could be that is short in *his* diet, what it could be that prevents him from giving and taking the warm, life-giving love that you both need. I'm

not for a moment suggesting that whatever is wrong with him is all your fault, what I am suggesting that you are, here and now, in a better position than anyone else in the world to help him, and that in helping him you will most assuredly be helping yourself. Don't be proud and stuffy and say that, after all that has passed between you, he ought to be the one to make the first effort. I know that it's up to you. (I'll try to justify that remark later.)

V

But this may not be among the things missing in your diet. Maybe you suffer, not so much from a lack of love from your nearest and dearest, as of lack of a friendly atmosphere at work or perhaps socially? Try the same sort of technique there. These unfriendly ones are disappointed, just as you are, and more than likely their disappointment is due to some lack of give-and-take in their own lives. How have you *really* been treating them? A woman who cleaned the house of a bachelor acquaintance, whom I very much disliked, put me to shame one day: 'Poor gentleman!' she said and sighed. 'Suffers terribly from his temper, doesn't he? I believe he's paid hundreds of pounds to try to get it cured too!' She, not I who disliked him, had the right attitude to that man. To get real love, or real friendliness, or real decency from other people, you must be able to give in real and not in counterfeit coin.

If in great things or small you or I give sham love, if we only behave decently in order to be in the right, or in the case of children to assert our ownership, we shall be most unlikely to get the love and friendliness we so much need.

VI

All this is doubly true in our relations with our children. Mother love is not such plain sailing as we have been

taught to believe, we must respect and trust our children and we must not let our love stand between them and the give-and-take they need with the rest of the world.

It is quite easy to let something false creep into our attitude to our children even when we do our duty by them. If we cannot get rid of whatever is conventional and sham we shall find ourselves starving for lack of love. Too often, as the American writer, Ruth Benedict, once pointed out:

"Our children are not individuals whose rights and tastes are respected from infancy as they are in some primitive societies, but special responsibilities, like our possessions, to which we succumb or in which we glory, as the case may be."

Here in Britain today we often treat children as extensions of ourselves, we dress them up so that they shall be a credit to us, we correct them in a way that gives them pain, just because a fault in grammar or in manners may make an acquaintance think that we don't know any better; worse, we sometimes use them to give us, as Ruth Benedict puts it in another passage, 'a special opportunity for a display of authority'.

Now it is impossible for any of us not to make mistakes in bringing up a child (this is another rash statement which I hope to justify later), but all mistakes are forgivable and most will be utterly forgotten, except mistakes which arise from lack of real love. But since we ourselves need our children's love, since it is vital for us, we must be sure that it is real love that we are giving them. If we give them real love, if we try to understand them, use our imaginations, use our sympathy, if we grant them opportunities to help us, nothing is more certain than that we shall get all these good things back from them, 'good

measure pressed down and running over'. The young are kind and generous and they feel warmly, even when they are not always tactful or experienced in their way of expressing their feelings.

VII

This list of nearest and dearest does not, I am well aware, exhaust the circle of people with whom a woman can and should have the life-giving interchange of true affection. Many of us need this interchange with other members of the family, our elders, brothers, sisters, and sometimes friends. Here, as with husbands and children, we again need insight and sympathy, a realisation of their lives, not only as they are now, but as they have been, and will be.

But here a note of warning must be sounded. There seem to be certain reasons why even the most saintly, affectionate, and intelligent of us will not find it possible to do a perfect job along these lines—no, not even with expert professional help from the best of psychiatrists. This is because even in our most personal and most intimate relationships we have to take into account a very much larger whole. The family of which we form part is also part of a community. If the values of that community are uncivilised or its customs or laws are unjust this will echo right into the innermost relationships. Let me quote Ruth Benedict again on one aspect of this—the bringing up of children.

"Detailed changes in the mother's nursery behaviour may well be inadequate to save a child when he is trapped in a repugnant situation which is reinforced by every social contact he makes, and which will extend past his mother to his school, his business, and his wife."

Just as it seems as though we can rarely improve our own characters by wishing we were better, or by sheer will-power, but may, as will be suggested later, need to use outside help—that is, to use time and to spend money on taking practical steps—in the same way we cannot hope to manage our private relations for the happiness of all concerned, if we ignore everything outside our four walls and small circle and don't take into account the larger community. Take an extreme instance and consider the impossibility of running a good private life while the Nazis were masters in a country. Many private measures, many of the things we can do for ourselves or for those we love, without consultation, are extremely useful, but we shall be disappointed with the results of our efforts if we fail to take into account the bigger whole.

PART THREE

WE ARE NOT ALONE

CHAPTER TEN

Custom and Human Nature

OUR lives and our private thoughts are to a much greater extent than we realise the result of custom and tradition. All through the first part of this book we saw Custom as a powerful force, we saw how, at every turn, its voice, which is Public Opinion, seems ready with praise or with blame. In the thing we are specially examining in this book, the position of women in Great Britain and the Dominions, we have seen that Custom, as it is written out in the law of the land, has changed a good deal, but we have also found that, in the unwritten Customs it has changed much less. We find a Public Opinion that still hampers and frustrates women, and Customs, such as the payment we get for our work, which seem downright unjust. We have seen, too, that Custom is often so strong, and puts such pressure on us that, again and again, it seems, to the individual, irresistible. It moulds what we say, so that many think their own thoughts but are unwilling to say a word that may seem to go against it. I myself repeatedly come across instances of this. If, at a meeting, I make a mild plea for more free time for housewives or better pay for career women, women will get up in the discussion afterwards and will say that change is impossible and undesirable. But these very same women will come up afterwards and say, privately, that they agree with me. Women who are just a little more conventional even think in accordance with Custom.

What is Custom? How does it happen that the traditions

of the world in which we grow up actually become part of ourselves, so that we find ourselves believing that what we have always known to be usual, is actually 'human nature'?

Ruth Benedict the anthropologist, some of whose opinions have already been quoted, says in her book *Patterns of Culture*:

"Custom has not commonly been regarded as a subject of any very great moment. The inner workings of our own brains we feel to be uniquely worthy of investigation, but Custom, we have a way of thinking, is behaviour at its most commonplace. . . ."

The very opposite is, however, the truth:

"Traditional custom, taken the world over, is a mass of detailed behaviour more astonishing than what any one person can evolve in individual actions no matter how eccentric."

In any public library you can find a long shelf of books that justify the truth of this statement and make clear what she means. Take down a volume and look at some of the pictures.

II

Here is a young man who stands by a glassy rock-pool with breakers and palm trees beyond. His fish spear is poised, his brown body is decorated with a white pattern, the water reflects his tense attitude.

Here is a girl. Her skin is almost golden and she is dancing. Her dress is elaborately stiffened, the colours are gold and scarlet, her jewelled head-dress lends her extra height, and the delicate curls of gilded and stiffened parchment, with which her dress is decorated, emphasise her

shoulders and hips with curves like those of a Chinese pagoda, or the upward curl of young unfolding leaves.

Here a woman holds a naked child. She is ebony black, her head is long, her nose small and aquiline, her arms and legs thin and delicate. Except for her colour you might think her a portrait from an Egyptian tomb. She bends smiling over the child, who reaches up to catch a gold earring that is shaped like an ear of corn.

Here is a sinister scene. It is night. Dancers in enormous masks and dressed in the skins of beasts, prance round a leaping fire. Drummers beat upon hollow gourds and hollow logs, the dancing-ground is set about with skulls, the dancers' masks and attitudes express violence and terror.

Turn on. Here is something very different. Under a scorching sun in the middle of a barren plain sits a circle of yellow-robed priests, slant-eyed and shaven. It seems that they have sat long, silently, and patiently.

Here is quite another picture. We are on the banks of a mighty river and a great throng has gathered. Thousands of gaily dressed, garlanded worshippers are coming up from the water and crowding with their children up steps and into the portico of an enormous carved and painted temple.

Turn the pages again. A procession of canoes is leaving the palm trees and the calm waters of a lagoon. The canoes are piled with coloured fruits and the men stand to their paddles. In the prow of one canoe sits a young bride with her attendants, all the girls are decked, robed, and flower-garlanded. The water splashes, the sun gleams, we can almost hear the songs of rejoicing.

III

All these people—black, yellow, bronze, and golden—know what they are doing. It is right, it is customary, that

the patterns on the body of the young man with a fish spear, the dress of the golden girl who dances, the masks, the robes, and the garlands should be thus and not otherwise.

All these people believe the most diverse things, and act in the most diverse ways because they have learned that thus and thus it is right to do and to believe.

This food, they say with authority, is clean, this is unclean, this necklace may only be worn by a hunter who has brought down an antelope. The earring for which the child reaches has a pattern, as definite, as long honoured as the pattern of behaviour to which the little smiling child will be moulded. Not one individual from any of these groups would agree with another as to what is right, proper, and usual, but each feels as clearly and strongly about these things as you and I do about our own customs. The groups in the pictures belong to many different races.

But we could take down another such book and in this one we could pick out pictures of contrasting groups of people who yet all belong to the same race and who moreover live not far from one another and who have completely contradictory ideas about such important things as the proper duties of husbands and wives, of chiefs, of neighbours, or of business and farming partners. They know exactly the duties of parents to children, and the duties of children to uncles, aunts, and grandparents; they know about giving presents, about revenge, about how to give a party, what to do at a birth, and about duty to your neighbour and to the dead. But all their ideas about these matters are different, and few of them are like ours.

Some of these many kinds of traditions or laws seem to have to do with morals as we know them. Some however do not.

In some nations and tribes Custom and Public Opinion enjoin that a kill, or a good catch of fish, or a good harvest

of yams must be shared among everyone. But in some, private property in food is jealously guarded. In some, certain foods may only be eaten either by the old or by the young, or by men or by women. Among some peoples (for reasons that seem to us incomprehensible) certain individuals will be outlawed—twins, for instance, or a woman who is no good at fattening pigs. If you are born an Arapesh or a Züni you are brought up to be gentle and co-operative, and you lose all public sympathy if you put yourself forward or try to be a leader. Among the Dobuans and the Mandugamore, however, you must be fierce, suspicious, passionate, take offence easily, and die if your honour is hurt; also you will get nowhere unless you can match your neighbours at poisoning and sorcery. If you were born a male Kwakiutl of good family you would have spent your life trying to outboast and outdo your neighbours in display and expenditure. You would not have been expected really to enjoy the display and the squandering of goods. Your aim in giving a party, for instance, would not have been to give yourself or the guests a good time, but 'to shame your rivals'.

Among many peoples a happy family life is fostered by carefully designed marriage and courtship customs, and children are often so much valued and loved that our idea of such a thing as an orphanage or a good slapping seems to them outrageously callous and cruel. In one tribe that Margaret Mead (another American anthropologist) studied in New Guinea the customary activities of men and women are almost the opposite of those Dr. Mead sees in America. Among these people it is the men who wear beautiful clothes, study the arts, and practise religion. It is the women who cut their hair short, who don't bother about clothes or make-up, who are busy all day and come home tired in the evening because they carry on the trade and business of the community. Good manners and etiquette

are just as varied. In some places you sit where we should stand—that is to say, as a sign of respect. In another a man takes off his shoes where your husband or mine would take off his hat, and it may be nice manners to go first, not last, through a door.

IV

The point we have to grasp about all these contradictory ideas and customs, is that though they seem queer to us, they are not questioned by those who have been brought up to hold them. Older people in each of these nations and tribes are just as sure that any other sort of custom would be 'against human nature' as your own most old-fashioned aunt or grandmother could ever be about what she was brought up to believe.

Nor can we bolster up our own ideas by thinking that customs that seem strange to us are the silly, simple whims of savages who have lived their lives in remote and isolated places.

On the contrary. Many of these peoples are less isolated than we are. The many contradictory cultures and customs of India, for example, have developed side by side through many centuries, while the Burmese are quite as sophisticated as we are, and the immensely rich and splendid culture of China is far older than our own. Many of these people can also look back to achievements that, taken all together, compare very well with ours and, again taken all together, they are immensely more numerous than the inhabitants of Britain and America even if you could count us as the same. We cannot, therefore, say that what we have come in the course of centuries to do and believe does fit in with 'human nature' and that what they do and believe does not.

Nor can we defend our customary ways of feeling by

saying that all these contrasts are due to differences of race. It is easy to pick out sharply contrasting customs and moral codes that belong to peoples of the same blood. As Ruth Benedict puts it:

"Not one item of man's social organisation or his language or his local religion is carried in his germ cell. All over the world, since the beginning of history, it can be shown that peoples have been able to adopt the cultures of peoples of another blood."

In support of this idea she gives instances of the way in which some particular custom, knowledge or skill has been passed on from race to race. Take our own heritage, for instance. Greek and Egyptian ideas of science, and of law, were passed on to the Romans and were later understood, learned, and added to by Arab invaders; Jewish traders learned scientific ideas from these Mahommedans and, in mediæval times, passed them on to our own ancestors, the peoples of Northern Europe, and they developed them further. Peoples of six races thus passed on and contributed to one important part of the culture pattern that we inherit.

A study of history shows that such a sharing of skills and customs by people of different blood is as common as its opposite (that is, for people of the same blood to have entirely different and contradictory ideas). In fact, the theory of the importance of 'Race', on which the Nazis relied to justify some of their worst crimes, will not stand examination.

V

So now, taking these facts into consideration, the reader can see that she has a perfect right first to question and

then to try to change those parts of our own ways and of our own customs that seem to her to make for unhappiness.

Custom as we can see, cannot be the same thing as 'human nature'. To each of us, however, till we stop to think, our own customs look solid and lasting. They seem a coastline bounding our horizon, they seem to stretch as far as we can see. Actually they are as unsubstantial and local as a bank of cloud, and, like a cloud, they change with the winds of circumstance.

Why, in the name of sanity, do we, like all these other peoples, believe so unquestioningly in our own customs? Why do we continue all our lives to follow the old paths and to set our children's feet upon them, even when we find by experience that these paths lead on to goals that we do not desire?

VI

This is a most important question and it is being examined by anthropologists today, as fresh social studies bring in more and more proofs of the ways in which the peoples of the earth vary. They are trying to trace out the means by which, in each nation or tribe, tradition and custom have been made to seem—for generation after generation—utterly convincing.

One of the facts that emerges from this growing pile of evidence is that we must have some sort of tradition. We are a kind of creature that cannot live without customs. However difficult a particular set of customs may make practical life, or indeed personal happiness (as we think of it), a tribe will actually die out—the men and women in it will cease to want to live or to rear children—if their tradition is too rudely broken up, even in order to make

way for ideas which we should suppose would be far superior. This is an important point to remember, because it is a fact which should make us feel patient with those in our own community who want to 'stick to the good old ways'. They may seem to us to be being obstructive, stupid and wrong-headed, but they may, literally, be unable to stand rapid change.

As to the ways in which a culture pattern grows and is kept going, the methods vary too much and are too elaborate to be summarised.

In all cases, however, they include something that specially concerns us as women. They include the way in which the children are reared. It is thus nearly always the women of any community who carry out the first and most important part of the process of moulding the newcomer. The moulding process lasts from babyhood, lasts the individual's whole lifetime, but the first years are the most important. Comparisons of the birth ceremonies of different communities seem to suggest that even the first hours of life may be significant.

Consider from this point of view, how, in our own society, doctors, midwives, and nurses begin to mould and even discipline the new-born infant. The process begins the moment the doctor or midwife rolls the child in an old shawl and turns to tend the mother. With us the newcomer is taught to feed by the clock, it learns to sleep alone in its own little crib. These things are done for the sake of the health of the child and the mother; they are nevertheless also lessons that will be reinforced all through later life by the school bell, by fixed meal- and bed-times, by punching the clock, by catching the bus or the train. They are the first instalment of the moulding that our community gives to its new members. No wonder—moulded as we have been—we seem quick and sudden to Eastern people, and they seem dawdling and slow to us.

Dr. Margaret Mead has made detailed studies of the ways in which the children of other communities are taught to fit into quite other patterns not only in matters of habit but of character. They can usually be made fierce and competitive, or placid and easy-going, or ceremonious or impulsive, according to the local ideas of right and wrong, good and bad. The moulding process begins so soon, and is so long continued that we invariably grow up to find it difficult to question the rightness of ideas in which we were reared.

In all communities where ideas of what is normal and of right and wrong are very rigid and fixed, the occasional individuals who can't be moulded and thus don't fit in, commonly have exactly the same sad fate as those who do not fit into our own Western pattern; misfits—it is important to realise this—will be of one sort in one community and the opposite sort in another. But gentle or hot-tempered, active or quiet, because he does not fit in he will count himself a failure, and will suffer acutely. He may even be killed or outlawed if he stays in the community and will suffer from all the nervous miseries and the sense of guilt and hopelessness that we associate with the unhappy nerve-cases and lunatics of our own mental hospitals. In her *Growing up in New Guinea* and *Coming of Age in Samoa* Margaret Mead gives a fascinating detailed picture of the process of moulding children to quite different but locally approved patterns. Instead of quoting from her material, let us take a quite trivial instance from our own kind of civilisation, partly because it seems at first sight so slight, and partly because it particularly concerns the subject of this book.

I can still hear in my mind the gentle, rather weary voice of a young suburban mother in New Zealand whose four-year-old son was playing nearby: 'You don't want to play with dolls,' said the tired voice. 'Dolls are for girls!

You play with your nice engine! . . . No, Ronnie, not that! . . . You don't want to play with dolls! Dolls are for girls! You play with your nice engine!' On and on went the tired, good-natured repetition. The mother was shelling peas. She did not take the doll away. But her voice was the voice of tradition, of custom. She was moulding her little boy so that he might grow up into our accepted pattern for a male.

We must mould our children, all human communities do it, like other mothers, black, golden, or brown, we only very occasionally and rather timidly dare to think how we would like to train them. Here in the West we seldom criticise, we seldom even wonder whether our own set of customs is tolerant enough. . . . But, remember, customs do change—sometimes for the worse, but sometimes for the better. The feet of little Chinese girls are no longer bound.

We do not want our children to grow up freaks—that would be hard on them and on us, but isn't it our duty to watch, to think, and to question customs that do not seem to make for happiness?

Margaret Mead has written two studies *Male and Female* and *The American Character* that, like the slight instance just given, directly concern the subject of the present book. She says that in America—and also here—both boys and men, women and girls, are forced by custom into separate patterns of behaviour that are quite needlessly rigid. There are, she says, immense differences between individuals, but these differences do not in fact run neatly and conveniently along sex lines. She would argue that my well-meaning New Zealand mother may at this moment be bringing her Ronnie up in a rigid way that may later either make him rebel and become an out and out 'pansy', or else may induce him to pretend to have likes and dislikes that he has not really got—so that he will, poor soul, make a show of liking the things that our

civilisation thinks go with the character of 'he-man'. What we have to ask ourselves here is, need our customs really be so rigid? Is there really anything odd or unmanly about a little boy who likes to pretend to nurse a baby? It is easy to think of other things that are yet more strongly forbidden—'taboo'—for males in our society. Is there, for example, really anything unmanly in liking pretty bright-coloured clothes, or even in liking scent? Before you give way to horror at the very idea, remember your history. The seamen of Elizabeth's day, such as Drake, were tough enough, but they sailed the seas and explored the continents dressed with fantastic brightness and got themselves up with scent, jewels, and embroidered gloves whenever they got the chance. British customs have changed—that is all. During the war it became customary for women to be brave and adventurous. We responded in tens of thousands to this new edict of Public Opinion.

VII

Perhaps it is our duty to try to make sure that the quickly or slowly changing customs of our own community should not only be as good as we can make them, but should include as much tolerance as possible.

That we Britishers should always remember to be tolerant will, incidentally, be quite in line with our very oldest traditions. Perhaps the greatness of Britain was partly due to the way in which we always appreciated and loved odd and eccentric characters? Observers from the continent have often noticed it in us. Our tolerance of eccentricity was true of us up to the time of Dickens, and today we still love to read of his queer, and indeed extraordinary, people. The custom of frowning on anyone who is not cut-to-pattern, streamlined, and mass-produced is a

comparatively new one here and, in part, it comes to us from America. Note that intolerance of oddity, fear of being queer, are specifically suburban, middle-class characteristics, and are not nearly so often found among workers, aristocrats, or among people such as writers or painters. Something more will be said later about the sometimes unnoticed fact that our own 'culture', when you come to examine it, turns out to be divided into different layers, one sort of virtue being popular and accepted in one stratum, and one in another, but for the moment that may be left on one side. Here we need only note that those who would like to take a hand in moulding custom and in setting new fashions can, with a certain amount of tact and cunning, do a good deal of picking and choosing and all without going far outside our own national traditions.

This fact may turn out to have its uses, for there is a saying that, if you want to launch anything new in Britain you should use slogans that begin 'Back to ——' and plead for your reform in the name of 'The good old days'. Bear in mind then, at this stage, that the tendency at the present day seems to be for our own customs to settle down to being those traditional chiefly in the middle class.

Though the virtues of this class are many, we shall also —if we take stock—realise with surprise that the pressure that at present tends to make us try to conform to its ideas is often far from having a respectable origin.

We shall find ourselves discovering that there are influences at work on you and on me which tend, from very dubious motives, to shape us in a way of which we are likely to disapprove. We shall see that we are pushed and pulled in a very powerful way, and the trouble is that the pushing and pulling are done from motives that are at best irrelevant and—as was said—at worst extremely dubious. Worst of all, the whole thing is even less obvious to us

than the more ancient 'traditions of the tribe'. We do not realise that we are being got at, but, like a lot of sheep, stream along a path that was none of our choosing.

What these influences are, how they do their work, and the fact that their far from respectable motives may actually give us a handle against them, shall be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Voices of the Market Place

WHAT should we say are the influences that bring about changes in Public Opinion? Most of us will think immediately of the cinema and the wireless, of propaganda by political parties, of newspapers, books, magazines, courses of lectures, perhaps sermons, and of the lessons that children are given in schools, and these things are indeed of the greatest importance.

I believe that it is important that we should also bear in mind something else, which is less often considered —the influence of the unceasing propaganda of the big advertising firms who sell 'branded goods'.

The big commercial firms influence us by their huge coloured posters and they speak to us equally directly and forcibly in the space that they buy in newspapers and magazines.

It has already been hinted that this influence is not always a good one, but this idea must not be enlarged into an accusation of sinister intentions. These big manufacturers, just like the cinemas and the retail shops, all have to make profits. They would all like to make very big profits, but, big or small, it is out of your family and mine that they must make them. So the art of coaxing us, the art of slightly altering our likes, dislikes and habits, the art of teaching us new wants, is very important to them.

Very large sums of money are spent on careful research by specially trained experts on just how we can be coaxed

and changed. Once it has been decided what the 'appeal' shall be for the sales-campaign for a given product, attractive displays of all kinds are devised. Posters, shop displays, and material in newspapers form an ordered whole. The plan is that we are to be flattered, or, it may be, frightened, into buying a particular product.

We consumers must try to bear in mind that the purpose of all this expensive research and these immensely more expensive display posters and publicity, is not to promote our happiness or well being. If, incidentally, the effect of these advertisers is to make snobs of us, if the publicity experts manage to frighten us about losing our teeth, boy-friends, or our social standing, if they make trivial things seem important, or even make our indigestion worse, that, from their point of view, simply cannot be helped. Increased sales for the expensive motor-car, the cheap stomach powder, the tooth-paste, make-up, or breakfast food, is the object. The danger to us, the wrong turn given quite incidentally to Public Opinion, is often hard to spot, just because these big advertisers are by no means always wrong in what they say, and not even always wrong in what they imply, so that the advice contained in advertisements is by no means always bad.

But, good or bad, such advice cannot be considered respectable because it is not an expression of honest opinion, yet is so well expressed that we forget that it is not disinterested. It has for its object just this, that we should spend just a little more money on this particular product rather than on that, or that we should be persuaded that we must have something that we have hitherto cheerfully done without, and for which we may or may not be any the better.

The appeals are extremely expert and are by no means always made to the good side of our natures, but help to

reinforce some of our least amiable qualities. The experts, by the way, are quite aware of this and know when to threaten and when to flatter.

It is amusing as well as rather alarming to look through the advertisement pages of any magazine or at the hoardings in any town in Britain and try to spot the different feelings to which the advertisers of this product and that have aimed. Many of them try to make you compete with your friends and neighbours about the most trivial and unnecessary points. The law of 'libel of trade' prevents me from giving instances or indeed from writing anything more precise. But any observant reader will easily understand the sort of thing I have in mind and hints are not actionable. Having spotted incitements to unamiable competition, look and see which advertisers try to frighten us. They are those that tell us that we shall lose our hair, be crippled by indigestion, be old before our time, never get a husband, lose the love of the one we have got, or be social outcasts, unless we pop into the nearest shop and come out with a packet, a tube, or a bottle of this or that. Quick, quick! Buy some scent, face-powder, a custard, a jelly, some floor polish, some tablets ! These, so the huge coloured posters and the big display advertisements assure us all, are the way to a man's heart, the way to social success, the sure talisman that will solve all your problems! Quick! Quick! they urge us. Rush out and buy this particular brand before it's too late.

The appeal is so well made, so cleverly directed, that this is exactly what even the most intelligent of us very often do, without stopping to think of what we know perfectly well. Life isn't like that, and anyway, Tweedledum and Tweedledee are not more alike than the rival brands. We know that success and failure, happiness and frustration, have deeper causes than custard powder or soap flakes and if things have gone wrong for us, we know—when we are

not being hustled, that we need to look elsewhere for the remedies.

But Adolf Hitler, and Barnum and Bailey, the circus people, knew, and said so, in so many words, that if you tell people things often enough, simply enough, in big enough print, and with enough bright pictures, the ideas you are putting across will stick.

It doesn't much matter about these trivial purchases. But what about the implications that came in quite incidentally? Alas, I suspect that you and I, and certainly many people with whom we are in contact, really are a little inclined to feel, because of all this propaganda, that our neighbours are critical rivals with whom we are bound to compete, rather than friendly creatures who happen to live near and with whom we might find it pleasant to co-operate? That bad tendency, which probably exists to some slight degree in all of us, really is made stronger by the nonsense shouted on the hoardings.

Margaret Mead says that if you could trace out the ideas in the heads of little Americans you would find them to be made up partly of what their mothers had taught them, partly of what they had learnt at school, partly of what they got from cartoons and 'comics' such as *Donald Duck* and *Superman*, and quite a lot out of what is in the advertising matter that they cannot help seeing, or which they pick up via their parents. By now some little boys and girls in this country do probably really feel ashamed if their white shirts or dresses are not as white as those of some other child.

What I want to emphasise is that this is the sort of new 'tradition' that we responsible adults must not swallow or pass on without taking thought. The idea which is being put over—the idea that there is shame in a certain shade of colour, a floor which has a mat surface, or a lack of whiteness—may or may not be true. The point is that it is being put forward not by people who honestly believe

in it, but quite irresponsibly in order to sell more of a particular product. It always seems to me to make it a little worse that all this publicity is not even designed by the makers of these goods or gadgets—they might conceivably have come to believe their own shouts or insinuations; it is all put about by advertising experts, who have been expensively called in.

II

Perhaps the most spectacular muddles in our own queerly compounded customs are those that have arisen from the advertising experts' handling of sex-morality and personal vanity.

Most parents in Britain today are, so many enquiries show, rather puritanical and 'proper' in the sex information and ideas that they pass on to their sons and daughters. But the huge posters that advertise films, or even furniture or cigarettes, put a premium on showing all the leg that nature ever gave a pretty girl, and in stressing such qualities as 'sultriness'.

This might be a case for tolerance if these ideas were put forward by people who sincerely believed in them for their own sakes. But they are not. Like the idea of 'whiter whites', the enormous young lady who for the moment is the ideal of 'sultriness' is pictured on the hoardings because someone hopes to make a lot of money, and often succeeds. What on earth is the poor adolescent, for whom we adults are responsible, to make of two completely opposite sets of instruction on this very tricky, important, and emotional subject?

III

Perhaps you think, however, that at least the 'editorials' and articles in your favourite paper or magazine are really

independent? Let me shake your faith. The news in your newspapers, the articles in your favourite magazine are all, to a greater or lesser degree, affected by the wishes, whims, and bright ideas of big and little commercial advertisers.

This is not because journalists and editors have been bribed by splendid presents of whisky or gorgeous underwear (as the case may be). I have been a journalist myself and I know that the actual journalists are mostly honest folk, and most of them would like to be much more independent and outspoken than they are allowed to be.

But what are they to do? Newspapers and magazines depend for their profits on advertisements, and if one of the big firms doesn't like the tone of an article, or even the plot of a story or a serial, they may, and often do, threaten to 'withdraw their account'—that is, in plain words, to stop advertising. I have known a big popular publisher do this very thing because of an unfavourable review of a book.

If you don't believe all this, just consider if you have ever read, and if so where, disagreeable remarks about advertisements such as those just made in this chapter. Have you ever seen anything of the sort in any of the excellent women's magazines that we all buy from time to time? I took to writing books instead of doing journalism (which is much better paid) partly because a writer is usually freer to say what he or she really believes in a book.

You didn't think there was a newspaper censorship in this country? Well, let me tell you that there is. If, again, you don't believe me, try an experiment. Try to persuade some famous author, who can generally sell anything to anyone, to write an article to the effect that we might all be the better if we did without most of the most widely advertised products; let him just steer clear of the law of 'libel of trade', but let him indicate clearly enough what

he means and the sort of breakfast food, soap-powder, motor-car, pickle, chocolate, indigestion remedy, or what have you. Then get him to try to place the article in a newspaper with a big circulation. But he would not even try—believe me. It's not that such an article would be immoral, or that he did not believe that this sort of thing might be worth saying. What you had tried to persuade him to say, he would be well aware, would be at least a point of view quite worth putting forward. But, in spite of the famous writer's fame, the unseen censorship would almost certainly prevent that article from appearing in any popular paper or magazine. What is quite certain is that this advertiser's censorship would prevent the publication of a similar article if it were to be written by an expert, or by a less famous writer.

Enough has been said, for neither I nor the publisher want the newspaper reviews of this book to be suppressed.

Perhaps you think that anyhow all this hasn't much to do with the subject of this book and is anyhow depressing? To my mind, it is extremely relevant and concerns women very directly. I also believe that the facts, though humiliating enough, are not necessarily depressing, because, once understood, they give us a lever by which we could change things. The lever, the key, as you have already guessed, is something that is inside your handbag, that lies inside your purse, alongside your latch-key—shillings and pence.

IV

There are two reasons why women could be more powerful than men if they should decide to bring about change in the way in which Public Opinion is formed in this country. Privately, inside the home, we could decide purposely not to pass on certain customs or ways of thinking to the children whom we bring up. We are also more

powerful than men if we should determine to make changes in the 'outside' ways in which Public Opinion is formed. We, more than men, are the people who spend the family incomes in this country. The lever we could use has two parts—the determination in our own heads and the money in the housekeeping purse.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Voices of Democracy

THOSE are not, of course, the only ways in which we can act, for we do not only tend the cradle and lay out the housekeeping money, we are also half the voters, half the newspaper readers, half the cinema-goers. If we determined that we would have a little more good sense, and good fun, more real imagination, more sincerity and a little less bally-hoo and nonsense in our film programmes, advertisements, newspapers, and magazines, we could succeed. We could do it, not only by well-applied boycotts, but by well-applied praise and support, by using our power as voters, and indeed in a dozen ways.

If all this is true—the reader may object—why haven't we done it already?

The answer, to a great extent, is that we live in such a way, were brought up in such a way, that it hardly ever occurs to women that we really have these powers. What happens is that instead of directing Public Opinion, we usually meekly let it do the directing. We are afraid of the blame we may get if we make a stand, and, meekly thankful for the praise we get if we come into line, we remain obedient and suggestable.

We, like the peoples studied by the anthropologists, have ourselves swallowed and taken in and made part of us the traditions we have learnt. We need discrimination, for some of our traditions are good and embody much wisdom and experience even though some, as we can see, came from very dubious sources. But the ideas inside our

heads are part of our current tradition, so that it is difficult, and often painful, for us to stand apart and examine it.

As a rule we can only separate ourselves for a short time from some one little bit of the whole complex, and then habit clicks us back again on to the old path. At this moment the reader may feel genuinely sceptical about advertisements. But how long will that mood last? Yet even if we succeed in criticising and scrutinising for a moment, we have effected something, for we have seen that the cloud moves, and is thus not the iron coast line for which we mistook it.

Let us take heart. We live in a democracy, we have the vote, we have, as has just been said, to a great extent the power of the purse and our opinions and views have therefore to be courted.

Suppose we have succeeded, almost miraculously, for a short time, in feeling free? What can we do? How could we begin to establish new habits? for, don't forget, some sort of customs and habits we must have.

One important thing to notice about a custom is that it usually becomes established through action of some sort, so that some kind of action will help us to establish our new ideas in our own heads as well as in the outside world.

II

Political action, political pressure are points we should consider. Political action is a slow way of procedure and those who use it find that they never get quite all they want, or else find that what they hoped for has become mixed with something they didn't want at all. Nevertheless it is well worth while to get to understand the workings of politics, because political power, in a community like ours, is something real.

Political action, like any action whose purpose is to change or direct what we have called 'outside' Public Opinion, will mean that we shall need to work with other people who on the whole share our views, and in practice, this usually means that we shall need to join some sort of organisation. The political parties are the most obvious and most powerful of such organisations.

During a general election in Britain we nearly all make an effort to think out some of our problems, to decide about a policy for solving them and also about the fitness of those who promise to carry them out. To be effective politically, it is necessary to begin to play a more sustained part and to study the policies and the history of the various parties and, having chosen, to be an active member. Many women still feel that politics and political parties are boring, some feel that questions such as economics, administration, and foreign policy are either too difficult to understand or none of their business.

But a change is taking place, women who used not to be interested now realise that, after all, political decisions have real consequences and have found that they very much come home to them. Those were bits of foreign policy that crashed through our ceilings during the Blitz, the use or outlawry of the Atom Bomb, though mainly in American hands, belongs to the same alarming department. Economic considerations led to our food being subsidised and also rationed after the war, while the administration of the National Health Scheme is also decidedly our concern.

Moreover, as soon as these things are studied, we also begin to realise that the different and hotly contrasting views of the political parties on such subjects as The Welfare State reach back to a difference in moral outlook. It is when they grasp that point, that many women realise also that politics in a democracy are interesting and

relevant. The reasons for the difference in the views of the political parties on, say, the nationalisation of further industries, have their roots not only in the history of a long struggle between rival interests that really have conflicted sharply, but even in a different view of the purposes of the community.

III

Outside the political parties there are also many organisations in which people band together and often succeed in bringing about changes—great or small—by bringing pressure on the political parties. Religious organisations often form such pressure groups—consider the Lord's Day Observance Society and certain organisations of the Catholic Church as examples.

Some people don't much like the ideas of joining such 'pressure groups' even to further special causes which they have at heart, they think they are usually run by cranks—indeed some of them are. Many, however, are not.

When a sufficiently large group of well-balanced, sensible people, armed with the power of buying or not buying, and of voting or not voting, make up their minds that they want something done, when they are active, write to the newspapers, to the B.B.C. or to cinema-combines or advertisers to say what they want, experience shows that, if they keep at it, they get listened to. In the end they will usually feel that the persistence and organising involved was worth while. Consider how this sort of pressure works and why.

First of all it is clear that a political party at election times is bound to respond, for it fears to lose votes if it does not.

Then a newspaper editor is sensitive to what his readers

say, because he is afraid that if he takes no notice his circulation will go down. If his circulation goes down, he will also lose or get less money for his advertisements. Suppose circulation does go down, then he anxiously wonders why, and is still more likely to listen to the pressure group's version of the reasons. He always wants to know, in detail, what his readers want.

Cinema proprietors are tough, and it is difficult, but not impossible, to affect attendances at particular films. But to effective pressure they too are sensitive because they, too, must attend. You are 'box office'—they must keep in with you or perish.

The B.B.C. is sensitive for slightly different reasons. Those who direct it have (and this is a blessed change) no direct financial interest in pleasing you. But the B.B.C. is constantly being criticised because it is a monopoly. It must be able, from day to day and from year to year, to prove to itself and to its critics that it does please and satisfy its listeners and television viewers. So far no device has been invented by which anyone at the B.B.C. can tell when listeners switch off in indignation or in boredom. Thus it is bound to judge the success of its programmes largely by the letters sent in by listeners. It reads all its letters, and sensible well-reasoned praise and blame are valued.

The huge cinema industry is much less responsible and sensitive than the B.B.C. and thus harder to influence, but even this can be done. Indeed, it has been done, in particular cases by such bodies as the Mothers' Union.

But perhaps, from our point of view, in this book, the best instance of the success of a pressure group is a political one, that of the Suffragists and Suffragettes, a group which won the vote for women and gave us the right to sit in Parliament.

IV

Whatever it is you may want to do, whatever cause you want to promote, you will almost certainly find, in this country, that a voluntary organisation already exists to do that very thing. You will also find that it is invariably trying to get more members, especially more active members, and more support of all kinds, and that your help will be welcomed.

Suppose you feel that the beauties of the countryside or of historical buildings should be preserved? You find at once that three or four flourishing societies exist for that very object. If your interest is in children's education, in adult education, in psychology, in science, in social-science, in some branch of the arts—in music societies, film societies, in societies for buying and showing drawings and pictures—you find the very same thing.

You can be sure that somebody else in your town also wants to have a film society so that films of special interest may be shown, or that they want a play-reading or play-acting group. The only trouble is, very likely, that so far there do not seem to be enough active people to support a practical venture. Whatever you feel is lacking in the world about you, whatever is 'short in your own diet', you can be sure that others, too, have felt the same lack. There is a short list at the end of the book—just a selection—to suggest to the reader the many ways in which every kind of object can be, and has been, promoted by people who have banded together with those of like mind. Some of them have been exceedingly successful in helping forward their various objects.

But now, no doubt, the old difficulty has shown its head again. How, the reader asks, am I to find the time, the money for the subscription and the energy, to fit something new into a life that already seems too crowded?

PART FOUR

ACTION HERE

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

What Can I Leave Out?

THE glance that we have just had at the ways in which Public Opinion is made, and the suggestions that have been made of how it may be possible in various ways to guide the changes that gradually come about, will have brought many readers back to practical difficulties. We have on the whole less time and less money than men, and, while the woman out at work probably has some free energy, the work of the twelve million housewives is of the kind that makes it difficult to have a free mind.

The reader is, however, perhaps now ready to agree that, given time and energy, we could all of us do something quite practical to help ourselves to be happier. We have a right and indeed a duty to try to achieve more of this 'interchange with life' if we feel in need of more, and we can see that, by developing these outside interests, we may also find that we have been helping to fulfil our responsibilities to the millions of girls and boys who are, at this moment, hopefully growing up into our bewildering and far from perfect world.

How is all this to be managed, for we have already seen evidence that one of the things that the twelve million housewives need is more leisure.

We shall, then, have to make up our minds that it is useless to think of fresh activities for the housewife, however excellent these may be, and however much they might be to her benefit and that of the world, unless we

can, at the same time, think of practical ways in which an already full day can be made less full.

II

Where can we begin? Shall we start with money?

I wonder if the housewife usually gets her fair share of the family income to spend on labour-saving devices? It's worth thinking of.

Could you, if you are a married woman with a family, perhaps look back at that list of your own 'routine activities' with a view to seeing if a small cash expenditure would help with some of your time-taking jobs?

III

Look back at that list also with a view, this time, to cutting some routine jobs down, or even to cutting some of them out altogether. Criticise that list. Who is the better, and how much are they the better, for some of the things you do?

No doubt, for example, the housewife will find that a good many hours in her week are taken up with shopping and marketing. Now it is a good idea for you to choose the fresh provisions that come into your house, and an occasional look round the grocer's does give you new ideas. But suppose that, at present, you shop three times a week, could you cut it down to twice or even once a week by placing standing orders? Don't do this if you enjoy shopping, but I know one or two young women with young families who have cut personal shopping yet further.

Your family might not get quite such good meals. Or, on the other hand, they might get even better ones, because you had that much more energy.

Or suppose you marked something else as a job that

you didn't like. It may be that you are keeping up too high a standard of housewifery in some department? If you enjoy polishing brass or putting up fresh window curtains, by all means go on doing it. But if you don't, it might be worth while to find out whether the fact is that you do these jobs in response to one of those cleaning advertisements and to compete, or in order to show off? Perhaps no one in the house really cares two hoots or even notices, or that, if they do care or notice, it is just out of politeness to you?

What about washing? Money spent on sending certain things out, or the buying of a washing machine—possibly in partnership with a friendly neighbour—might be a solution? I know from experience that things done or bought in partnership with someone else can be more bother than they are worth, but the possibility of clubbing together either for baby-sitting, child-minding when shopping, or for buying expensive equipment that isn't wanted every day, is worth thinking over. Think about a washing machine, steriliser and thermometer for bottling, a really good heavy preserving pan, a treadle sewing-machine, perhaps a vacuum-cleaner. Again there is the job of mending and altering clothes. Your share of the family money might help here. There are often people in a neighbourhood—invalids sometimes—who are willing to take on this sort of work. This may be a help either to the housewife or to the career woman and give her free time for something outside or for reading.

Small structural alterations in a house—even if it is a rented house—may be a great help. I am tall, and find that almost all sinks are too low for me. To raise a sink (and to alter the plumbing accordingly) costs money, of course; so does installing a labour-saving coal or coke cooker that burns all night. But might the money be a fair share of yours from the family purse, and would the landlord take

over an improvement at a valuation if you moved? These are the sort of questions I had in mind when I said, earlier, that while Public Opinion will give approval to a woman who wants to improve her own character it may yet give blame if she should want to spend money or time on the job, and when I further said that if she was in earnest about her efforts she might have to make up her mind to do this very thing!

Again on the money side, I should say, in general, that though some gadgets for occasional jobs, or jobs you enjoy anyhow, can easily be more trouble than they are worth, yet it is usually good to spend a fair amount of forethoughtfulness and a proportion of available money on shortening the time and energy spent on jobs that you don't like doing, that are really necessary and that have to be done constantly perhaps several times a day. These jobs include washing-up, cooking, laying tables, mending, children's washing, and so on.

Circumstances will dictate whether the expenditure should take the form of getting in paid help (if you can), of buying or altering the tools and appliances, or co-operating on a money or other basis with someone else; but what is clear is that you will have to either contrive or to leave out something, and will have to cut down time and energy somewhere if, as things are, you feel hard pressed and yet you want to have time to be human.

IV

The question of Custom, Public Opinion, the 'done thing', comes in constantly as well as the money problem. Some changes in the usual way of doing things may seem unthinkable because they are not customary here, though they may be quite usual twenty miles away—on the other side of the Channel.

In France, to take a minor example, the recurrent task of washing-up is lessened by two habits. One is that of using the same knife and fork for two courses that don't disagree too much in flavour (little knife-and-fork rests are set by each place to save the tablecloth). The other is the French habit of using pleasant-looking casseroles with ears instead of saucepans with long handles, or else enamel or aluminium dishes, for both the cooking and serving. The dish is served in the pan in which it was cooked. Pottery or metal dishes, by the way, save work more than those of toughened glass, which, though charming, show stains. Such labour-saving dishes can be bought in England.

Then there are new materials to consider. If ironing is what you dislike, the new Seersucker and nylon dress and underwear materials, and the wearing of cellular shirts cut this task down.

V

Be sure to make your saving of time and work on the jobs you don't like, and then to use the time thus saved for doing things you do like. Don't fall into the trap of saving time only to set yourself a yet higher goal in housewifery! Keep firmly in mind that there is, literally, no end to the things that might, or could, be done in a house, only an end to what should be done, and that good housewives here and in Scotland usually already do more than is really necessary by any sensible standard of hygiene or comfort. To do more than is strictly necessary can be delightful—it is the craftsman's flourish. But it is only delightful if it has been done because the craftsman really enjoys it. It must not be forgotten that there are other values that the perfect housewife is bound to neglect, and it may well be that they are more important—as the story of Martha and Mary, for instance, suggests.

What is certain is that, if she would like to spend a proportion of her time in some other way, it would almost always be possible for the housewife to contrive it. But first, she must stop and arrange a few 'priorities', second, she will need to spend a little of the money she administers a little differently, and third . . .?

VI

In some way or other she must make her needs and hopes known to her family. What, in effect, she will want to tell them will be something like this:

'I very much want and need a few free hours a day, or a week. This, or that, gadget or way of arranging things would help, but it will cost a little extra money. How shall we budget to meet this expense? Then, further, what do you feel could be left undone without being missed? Or will anyone take something off my hands?'

How such ideas can best be put across, how the need for budgeting for any extra money she will need is to be conveyed, will be best decided by the person chiefly concerned.

You don't feel like consulting the others? In that case you could probably get your doctor's support if you feel you need help in breaking things to them. It would be most unwise of course to bring in the opinion of your own family, your friends, or in-laws, but what the opinion of a doctor brings in are only a set of extra facts, the reasons why your need is quite real, his support implies no criticism of anyone.

Explain to your doctor that you yourself feel the need of a little change or rest now and then. He would probably have told you on his own initiative to have it, only he may think you can't manage it. Many doctors speak of their difficulty in offering advice that only seems a mockery.

Having got his support—if you feel you need it—a good

deal of care for other people's feelings may be needed when you talk things over with the family. You will probably find it wise to put your points in a positive, and not a negative, form, that is, to say that you want the free time, rather than that you are sick of certain jobs; and you will be wise to try to get spontaneous suggestions. You don't want the family to feel you are criticising them—even if you are. You might say: 'I should like to do (this or that), to go (here or there), but I don't seem to manage to have time, or, if I do have the actual time I feel too tired to bother. What ought I to do?'

If you ask for suggestions in this way, you may, of course, draw a blank. This may be because your nearest and dearest have very little idea how you spend your time as it is, and this may be your fault or theirs. So, in some families, it may be better not to make too general a suggestion. You might say that you wonder if anyone would like to see to the supper on a Thursday night because on Thursday nights you—for a while—want to go to a set of lectures or the cinema or a whist drive? Or you could wonder if they would miss the brass if you put it in the cupboard, wrapped up in paper so that it would keep bright? If they say they would hate to make supper on Thursdays and that the brass is the one thing in the house that they like to look at, you can suggest that someone else—preferably the brass-lover—does the polishing, and that in exchange for your kindness in getting the supper before you go out on Thursday, someone else does the breakfast on Friday?

These are all fairly trivial suggestions; your attitude is what will matter. You must feel, it should be repeated, that, if the others are indifferent or reluctant, and thus seem selfish, this may well be your own fault. Possibly you have been possessive about your house, or have been too proud to let your family realise that you are human too.

But, if you feel tolerant, if you can smile at their pig-headedness, you must also feel persistent. You must say to yourself that, in the long run, this new deal of yours, this beginning to take reasonable care of yourself, is to the advantage of the whole family and is not selfish. If your children are big, and if you thus have a right to some help from them, say to yourself, as you persist—and the process may take time—how much their future husbands or wives will bless you for house-training them.

In the case of big children you must be sure that you are fair in the way you ask help—you must take trouble, and must, for example, let the clumsy, forgetful one do something, and not pile it all on to the competent one. You must also be imaginative—not only fair—about the sort of work you try to get them to undertake. Let it be something that they find suits them. Show them how you do it and let them try other ways if they want. Don't let it seem that you are suggesting they should help you because it is 'only fair', or your new deal will seem like a punishment. Remember to admire, notice, and praise what they manage to do, and, at the other extreme, don't be jealous if they do a job better, quicker, and more neatly than you can do it yourself. This is a thing which may very well happen if you have got into a generally fed-up state with a particular household job which may be quite a pleasant change to them.

If help is coming from your husband, bear in mind his needs too, for instance, the points emphasised in Chapters 5 and 10, that, as things are run today in most homes, the father does not see enough of his children. He might enjoy seeing more of them and it might be very good for them, too. Child rearing is a very creative activity though, like all creative activities, it is apt to be exhausting to you because you have so much of it. But if his job is a routine one, creative activity may well be just what is short in his

diet. The very idea of coping with small children may terrify him at first, but if you can, by using your imagination, somehow get him over the first alarm, he may well come to enjoy it. If he does, you will have greatly benefited him, the children, and yourself.

The children, too, may, at first, be highly surprised, and not necessarily delighted, if Daddy suddenly takes to bathing them occasionally. But if you are well out of the way, if possible out of the house, things may go on better than if you were there to be appealed to every five minutes.

It's wonderful how good our children are when we are not there to see!

These are only a few of many possible suggestions; and they are suggestions that suffer from the limitations of all good advice, they cannot possibly fit the problems of every possible reader.

That, however, does not matter. The principle is the thing. Women have a right to 'stay human', they should exercise that right, but should exercise it with forethought, tact, and above all with affection and imagination.

VII

So far we have spoken of the efforts at clearing a way that might be made by a housewife.

The career woman, though she usually has more leisure, had special problems too. Some of these come from the fact that she probably has to dress reasonably well on rather too little money, and therefore feels that she must save by making her clothes or at any rate taking very great care of them. Then she probably has, at any rate, some of the housewife's burdens, for she is unlikely to earn enough to live where she is 'all found', and may have shopping and cooking to do. She, too, could probably cut down the time spent on 'care and maintenance' by taking thought, but

here again I hope she has filled in that list, for it is important that she should really know her preferences as well as her 'musts', otherwise she may make the mistake of cutting out little jobs that make a change and are enjoyable. But if she hates, let us say, ironing and tacking in white collars and cuffs, or, on the other hand, marketing in her dinner hour, it might be an idea to get one of these things done for her by a payment in cash or kind and for her to raise the money by doing some other job. How about being a 'sitter', or doing some coaching, or thinking of some other odd job which might prove interesting? It is a good idea to remember that, though, alas, a good many uncongenial jobs cannot be dodged, some can, by the simple expedient of doing something else. Though you may very likely have to spend as much as you get in making the exchange, there may be a gain in enjoyment and that is the most real sort of gain. It is, however, usually important for the career woman to choose an activity that is not just a continuation of her ordinary work. Some business girls and teachers, for instance, are good cooks, or skilled gardeners, and might find 'jobbing' on these lines more fun than something that might pay better and be more obvious—say, typing or coaching students.

VIII

When we try to consider what to leave out, the general picture then is this.

A woman should try to leave out the things in which she finds least satisfaction. This will not always be possible, but it sometimes happens that a few of these disliked activities will be things that either need not be done at all, or that someone else is willing to do.

A housewife should feel that she has a right to spend a reasonable proportion of the family money in thus clearing

a way for herself, and should reflect that this money will bring in a dividend of family happiness in as far as it increases her own pleasure in life by enabling her to do things that she wants.

If the housewife is skilled and has had perhaps a special training and if the time cleared by these savings of home-time enables her to earn a little money by doing a part-time job, this particular side of her problem will, of course, be simpler. She will not only think, but be sure that she has a right to spend something. All the same she should try her very best to get the other members of her family to consent and co-operate in necessary rearrangements of routine. They also need the give-and-take with life and with other people that she needs. If she accepts their help they will have benefited. They too need to give. In as far as she succeeds in showing them how they can best give to her, in as far as she is able to take warmly, affectionately, and gratefully from them, she will have made the family partnership that much the richer.

Last of all, the woman who has thus managed to secure a little more change and variety, must try to make her own attitude a positive one. She must really try to enjoy and to use satisfactorily the time that she has cleared for herself. If she has allowed herself to get into too deep a rut, if the walls of her home have been for too long prison walls, this may well prove to be unexpectedly difficult. In the next chapter we shall try to suggest ways in which this difficulty can be handled.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Don't Kill Time

MEN sometimes say of women that, if they do have a little spare time, they don't know what to do with it. This is sometimes true of the housewife, but the fact is not necessarily a criticism of women.

The housewife, as we know, usually gets any leisure she may have in unexpected snippets, is often tired when it does come, and has had no time to arrange to do anything with it. It is all very well to say that this very state of things is most likely her own fault, but that moral judgment is not really more helpful than the judgment of the 'right thinking woman' who says, on the other hand, that a woman 'ought' not to want anything outside her home.

Let us then consider the disappointment of the housewife or the career woman who has managed to clear a few hours out of a busy week, but finds, to her disappointment, that, after the effort of clearing, the precious hours hang on her hands. Instead of feeling free, she may actually feel an exile from her own home. This very point has been put to me several times by women. 'If I *had* free time I shouldn't know what to do with it!' The short view of that remark is that this woman didn't need free time, the long view is, I believe, just the opposite. She needed free time more than most, but she also needed, to begin with, some sort of stimulus and help as well.

Perhaps we might compare such a woman to the prisoners in the Bastille, or, to come nearer home, to certain ex-service patients who are still the bane and the

problem of one or two naval and military hospitals. These men have had a bad time, they are now more than convalescent. The fact is that, medically, they are quite fit to take their place in the world again, but they have been out of it for so long that they don't feel that they fit in any longer. They don't feel that they can face the world and they set to work to bluff the doctors, and often manage to fake symptoms with uncanny success. Though their determination to stay in hospital is naturally most annoying to the authorities, yet, to some extent, their feeling is a true one, they really do badly need help in adjusting themselves once more to the world. To their cronies each of these men puts up a show—often a convincing one—of being a cunning fellow and of 'knowing when he is well off', and so on. The fact is that they are not happy, and would be far better off if only they could take the plunge and would go out.

It may seem far-fetched to compare an able-bodied and apparently merely lazy man, who chooses to trifle his life away, to the overdriven woman who is so tired that she cannot find anything worth doing in a few hours of leisure. But, moral judgments apart, they are both in need of rather the same sort of help. Both have had some sort of a hard time, both have got into fixed habits from which they find it difficult to step out.

II

Is there anything that the hard-worked woman can do about what may prove to be a very disappointing state of things?

The reader who has followed this book will, I hope, not expect that there is any sure-fire general piece of advice that will suit everybody who experiences this difficulty. Apart from our great differences in temperament, we are

all differently situated. Yet if any intelligent woman once grasps the fact that, if she does arrange for time off, she may *expect* to feel rather at a loose end at first, and that this will not be a proof that leisure is undesirable, if, moreover, she treats herself as a temporary convalescent, she will find her problem easier and will be closer to evolving her own solution. She will see that a very mild kind of activity may be what she will really enjoy at first, and will believe that she can expect to feel much more enterprising after a time. So she may be content for a while—if that is how things are—with occupations or amusements that, if they were to be permanent, would seem too trivial to be worth the bother of planning for. It might well be that a casual visit to a neighbour, a solitary walk or a solitary cinema are all she wants for a while. One woman told me that she longed for an hour or two in which to lie on the grass and watch the sky—nothing more. But later on she will probably feel better and want something more. Let me try to show what I mean by instancing the sort of advice that might be given to the woman whose letter is quoted on page 25.

Mrs. Davies, if the reader remembers, had been an almoner at a hospital, she is now married, and says in her letter that she finds the routine of work inside the four walls of her home is getting her down; she finds it exhausting, and she is lonely. One of this actual woman's difficulties is that she lives in the country. Let us suppose then she lived in a big town; it is very possible—since she is highly skilled—that she could immediately get part-time work at a hospital, for hospitals are so hard pressed that they will often accept offers of a couple of afternoons a week from such skilled people as Mrs. Davies. But even if that were so, Mrs. Davies isn't ready for that. Since she has been shut in for so long, it would be better for her at first to try a much simpler remedy—just time for a walk

on her own, time to listen to the wireless, time to read a book. She might next try taking a refresher course in her own subject, not so much for the sake of what she might learn, as for the opportunity it would give her of meeting people with similar interests and of renewing the pleasure we all feel in talking our own kind of shop. Only after that sort of convalescence would she benefit by part-time work.

But of course, as usual, prevention is better than cure, and this is a point for newly-married readers to note. It would have been better for Mrs. Davies if she had somehow managed all along to keep her hand in at her own profession, even if only to the extent of taking in a professional journal, of subscribing to the right sort of library, and of making a point of contriving time to read the books reviewed in her almoners' journal.

LII

The housewife who had some sort of skilled profession that she has enjoyed, should, in general, in some way or another, try to do this very thing—that is use her leisure to keep her hand in. She will just manage, while her babies are young to (let us say) paint enough, to read enough, to practise typing, to keep up with an educational subject, not to lose her old dexterity, and not to feel completely blank when she meets people of her old profession or—if she is a trained nurse for example—if she is suddenly called upon, in an emergency. If she keeps her hand in she and her husband will reap the benefit in two ways, first she will remain more the girl he married than if she dropped everything (and presumably that was the sort of girl he liked). Second, when the children are at school, and work at home is less pressing, she will still have a skill that she can add to—a real resource of her own.

Finally, when housekeeping is for two once more (and

we saw that a woman is now likely to be an active creature still when that happens), she can, if she wants, be an earner once more. This may well prove to be very desirable, even if not strictly necessary, if only because, for example, much more entertaining holidays can be planned than if a retired pension, however good, is the only family income.

All these things count from the point of view of private happiness; the benefit to the community of the skilled woman who keeps her hand in is even more obvious. The reader may perhaps recall the indignant outburst of the high official who said that these highly trained girls ought not to be allowed to fill up their whole day with unskilled jobs. It seems likely that, in Britain for many years, every kind of skill will be valuable.

IV

The skill or the talent that the housewife started with may not, however, have been of the marketable sort. If so, the value of keeping it alive and of increasing it is hardly less. We have spoken of the value of pressure groups, political and other, and of the way in which the influence of thinking and sensitive people should be used to improve the culture pattern of our time and country and to combat influences that might make it sink into cynical commercialism or sterile uniformity. There are a great many things that need doing in our democracy, things which, for success at doing them, need not mainly knowledge, or even experience, but for which the real qualification is the balanced adult character, of whose importance so much has already been said.

The first thing that comes to mind in this sphere—because the need is so urgent—is the need for more women who will help with our common responsibility for the

nations' children. In a recently published book *Children in Need*, which contains comments on much of the matter in the Curtis report, Mrs. Schmideberg, a well-known psychiatrist, stresses this problem as she goes deeply into the causes of juvenile delinquency. It is a book which will put heart into the active, practical, but unqualified woman who, because home does not claim all her time, feels that, since she has had no special training, there is nothing that she can do. She need not think that she is not wanted. Dr. Schmideberg shows that there are innumerable jobs of all kinds waiting for her. These are not necessarily concerned with the children themselves, but range from going into Local Government to helping with a Godmother or Good Neighbour scheme, being a part-time home-help, teaching other women how to cook, or making toys or pretty frocks for children who have been starving for lack of love, as a proof that somebody cares about them.

But unless the contact with the actual children is—as in the case of frocks and toys—a remote one, this is a job for the well balanced. Such work is not a good outside interest for those who are, at the moment, themselves nervy, and who may hence, for the time being, be either bossy, timid, or easily upset. But for the woman who is well balanced, this is work from which she will benefit. I know a London housewife whose children are out in the world, and who has a rather anxious delicate husband. Her whole life has been changed for the better by becoming an active part-time Visitor for the School Care Committee, a type of social worker peculiar to London. She is placid, cheerful, pleasant to look at, pleasant to talk to. She is asked by the school authorities to visit homes where difficulties have arisen, sometimes of health, sometimes of other kinds. She acts as a liaison officer between the Education Authority and the parents. What she *gives* is encouragement, practical information, and sensible, tolerant advice.

What she *gets* are fresh interests and a new insight into a series of ever-shifting human dramas. Since she took up the work I have heard her grown-up children quote her opinions and experience with a new respect, while her husband is glad to co-operate by doing for himself many things that he would otherwise leave to her. It is a pity that this sort of work is not organised in all our cities.

Hospitals, however, are everywhere—and, as has already been said, are now eagerly on the look-out for help of many kinds. Here is another interesting and useful outlet.

In general don't forget that what is called 'Social work' really is social—that is to say—sociable and full of interest. Those who take part in it come close to deeply interesting and often dramatic human problems and work with experienced and often entertaining colleagues whose company is usually agreeable. It is an odd thing, but work is often more sociable than play. Many of us who are socially choosy, and who would never pick out Mrs. Brown as a congenial companion if they met her at a tea-party, will find that, if they are working with her, Mrs. Brown can be very good company.

V

Many readers, however, will not find themselves attracted to this sort of activity, and that is a very good reason for letting it alone. Such work will not be fruitful if it is done from a sense of duty, but only if it fulfils something in the doer's own nature—in fact there must be *take* as well as *give*. There are plenty more alternatives. For example, all educationists today are concerned with education for leisure. There will be no really full satisfying life in this country, however, unless there are enough adults who know something about the sport, the play-production or

whatever it is, and can and will help (for their own sakes as well as that of the young) to make this leisure life a reality, and who are the sort of people who, in sport, do not introduce commercialism. We said something in the last chapter of the influence of commercial interests, of how big firms, in their effort to sell their products subtly and irresponsibly, influence our outlook and our morals. All that was said under that head is just as true of leisure. There are, as we all know, plenty of commercial interests that want to cash in on the communities' increased free time and to turn it to their own profit. Betting, the drink trade, and so on, are very big business indeed. It is hardly necessary to remind ourselves that their influence is not always good, and never very responsible. I happen to live in Wales; leisure here has not been as much commercialised as in England, and to a great extent, people run their own amusements for themselves—concerts, drama-competitions, and indeed every kind of artistic and social activity, and I can testify that this does make for a full and good life. We English are no stupider than the Welsh, we could do what they do, but often, with us, those who know how to do something agreeable and how to do it well—whether it is embroidery or part-singing—don't come forward as they commonly do in Wales. Only in our organisation of amateur sport do we in England sometimes take trouble about making free time agreeable, rewarding, and uncommercialised.

VI

But perhaps for the serious, shy English, it is necessary to prove that anything except sport and work are worth taking trouble over? I myself feel passionately that we could, as a community, be happier and, because happier, more successful, and because more happy and successful

also more tolerant and wise, if we took a little more trouble and devoted a little more time and energy to the arts. In the first place naturally, what every practising artist in every field of art passionately wants to see is a much larger and more critical and appreciative public.

A word or two has already been said here of what a great effect readers, listeners, and cinema audiences could have on such things as television programmes, broadcasts, and the cinema, but there we were thinking of such things chiefly as social forces. Let us take a fresh instance of this consumer's influence, and consider it this time for its own sake. Consider a technically difficult, and thus highly professionalised art, that of architecture, and let us see what the amateur can do. Don't think that because you are not an architect you can't help your country to have finer architecture—my husband is an architect and has taught me better. There was a time, as he has taught me, when it was part of a liberal education here to know something about the sort of proportion that a building ought to have, to have an idea of what the architect was trying to do and thus to be able to have an opinion as to whether, in the new building that was just complete, he had brought it off. The point is that that was also the time—in the eighteenth century—when British architecture really flourished—hundreds of great buildings still stand to prove it. An intelligent public both laughed at the dunces and encouraged the good architects—the result was fine buildings.

If you don't believe this we can change the ground and can instance the recent history of British music.

Fifteen or twenty years ago Radio became a powerful influence, and the B.B.C. set itself to give the public, not just the music that it then wanted (which was then nothing very good) but something just a little better. The first consequence was that musical taste in this country

improved immensely, and people got more pleasure: the second was that we began to have new young players, new symphony orchestras, new young composers. The process has not been going on for very long, but already there is a good deal to show. Benjamin Britten and William Walton are well-known names, not only here but all over the world, while the new Edinburgh Festival is said by those whose opinion is worth having, to compare well with the long-established and famous Salzburg festival.

Thus to cultivate your own taste in any art, and to take the trouble to express an opinion, even if you do no more, is to help the arts. A lively nation, like our own, is all the time throwing up artistic talent of one sort and another. Unless, however, there is a public which can both like and dislike, and can both hiss and applaud, that knows and cares about what is being done and attempted, most of these talents will be lost to us. The sincere young artists who might have shone, go into banks or drive trams, or at best become interior decorators, play the violin in a restaurant or become journalists; and the public never knows what it is missing.

But the question we seem to be dodging is the question of what precisely it is that people who neglect the arts are missing? What, the reader may be asking, is the point of the arts? Does all this matter? It would take a very long book to discuss this question adequately, and even when people write such books nothing usually seems to have been proved. This is because it is as difficult to prove the value of the arts to someone who has never enjoyed even one of them, as to explain a view to a blind man or to give reasons for the fact that, as a rule, we love our children. And yet perhaps something of the sort ought to be attempted here, even though any such attempt is foredoomed to be a failure. For the value of leisure and of the arts comes very close to the subject of the present book,

and very close, too, to the subject of the present chapter. For what we are trying to decide is what a woman could most profitably do with her leisure if she had any. We are trying to determine whether she could contrive that that leisure should be, not just a rest, or just a trivial trimming, or, worst of all, just a disappointment. It should, we have said, be spent on something that will help her and hers to grow to their full stature.

To explore the nature of all the arts is too big an undertaking even to attempt here. Let us, however, see if we can find out anything about the value and nature of art if we confine ourselves to the sort of artistic experience that can be got out of books.

Books have been, traditionally, the main artistic resources of women. Books are cheap, they can be put down when the baby cries, and, as Virginia Woolf has pointed out, they are the one creative field in which it has been possible for women to take an equal place with men.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

What is the Use of the Arts?

IF we compare life in Britain, the Dominions, or America today with the present way of life in many other lands or with our own past history, we may notice an odd little fact. We are unusual because we give so little time or attention to the arts. Might a certain disappointment that we feel, because the enormous advantages of our modern life don't seem to have made us that much happier, have something to do with this curious fact?

We do practise the arts of course, for we decorate our rooms, plant flower-gardens, paint patterns on our cups and jugs, read books, and listen to music, but we do most of these things rather half-heartedly, and in fact we pursue the arts in a languid way, as if they were trifles.

When the ordinary reader today sits down with a book in her hands she is not consciously on the look-out for Artistic Experience. If questioned, she may look up and say that her murder story passes the time, or, questioned a little further, she may pause long enough to remark that a nice story takes her out of herself.

You, my own highbrow reader, are perhaps already feeling contemptuous? It is ridiculous, you protest, to waste time thinking about the attitude of this woman who has taken *Murder on the Back Stairs* out of the library. A rubbishy book has got a silly uncritical reader. Reading a book called *Murder on the Back Stairs* in order to be 'taken out of yourself' has got nothing—my own highbrow protests—to do with art.

I want to make a plea for that woman in the armchair with her feet up and a box of chocolates handy who is so absorbed in her shocker. She has, I grant, only taken one small first step, and *Murder on the Back Stairs* probably really is a shoddy, silly, mechanical book. But the reading woman did report one good thing about it. She has told us that she is getting the first of the many good gifts that the arts can give us. She is being taken out of herself.

Escapism! objects my highbrow tartly. But surely we all need to escape sometimes. Therefore, bad as we will grant this imaginary book to be, the woman with her feet up is getting at least something in return for the twopence she paid in order to read it.

The question we might perhaps usefully ask ourselves is whether bad art is better than no art at all? Would we rather, for instance, that she had been reading *A Handbook of Practical Plumbing* or a pamphlet on the international situation? I guess—for she looks a hard-working soul—that what she needed was a rest and a change. Obviously my own reader and I should both have been better pleased if she had found a better novel, but it really should, I think, be a novel, a book that will, with all its faults, fulfil her quite real need to be taken out of herself.

II

And how? (it is another but also very critical reader who chimes in at this point)—how is it to be decided which of two story books is better than the other? Tastes differ, she reminds me. Are you sure, this second reader objects, that there really is such a thing as a tape measure or a pair of scales by which the merits of anything like a novel, anything that calls itself a work of art, can be judged? Consider any work of art; a book, a picture, a piece of music; just think how tastes change in these things and how

critics differ. Is there really any standard by which we can judge such things?

I think there is, but I am not just now going to be lured away into discussing any of the forms of art that are not shut between the covers of books.

I firmly believe—I say to this second critical reader—that we really can grade the merits, for any particular reader, of books that make some attempt at being works of art (those that take us out of ourselves), by finding out whether that particular reader, having been taken out of herself, has brought anything back with her?

The imaginative book stands or falls by what it has been able to give the reader while that reader was taken out of herself. If I am asked what it is to give its reader, I shall be in a difficulty. For what I have in mind is not the sort of thing that our imaginary reader might have got from that book on practical plumbing or from the pamphlet on international affairs. What, we should ask, in judging a book which tries to be a work of art, is whether its reader will come back with some sort of fresh enlightenment, some increase of experience, as if she had been somewhere new, or had felt understanding, love, or hate for someone, whether she had come back with fresh insight into the lives of a group of people, or felt that she had lived in another climate? If the answer is 'Yes' it was—for her—a good book. For if she has come back with such fresh insight she has grown a little, she will thus see and feel her own over-familiar surroundings almost with a shock of novelty just because she has grown and has developed. A book which is a work of art tells its readers many true things that a book that is mainly concerned with facts has to leave out. The work of fiction is much closer to real life, especially to the realities of the hidden life, as we have here called the unconscious. Let me try to be clearer.

If you wanted to learn about another country, you

might think that books on its geography and history are what would be most to the point. Such books are indeed useful, but, preparing to visit New Zealand, I found that stories by New Zealanders told me most, and that it was her imaginative writers who helped to give a would-be traveller some idea about how New Zealanders see and feel.

To suppose that you cannot experience a great deal that is valuable to you about far places and past times by reading their authors is a delusion. Thus to read is not a complete but a special kind of experience. Are we, you and I, to believe anything so dismal as that we are never to have the least idea how it feels to be French or American? Never to have any idea of how it felt to have been born here in Britain during some other century? Must we put up with being completely tied to our own meagre little strips of time and place? Certainly not! For there are artists, great writers and poets, who will lend us their eyes and ears. When we read the work of a really great writer which is concerned with something that we have actually experienced, or is about places that we know, we often see and understand better than we could have seen for ourselves. The difficulty at first, when we read about things we have not experienced, is to know whether or not the writer is telling the truth. But with practice, by measuring a new writer against one who is a classic and certified to be a good guide, we get a sense of when we can dare to trust a writer. We may make a mistake now and then about an author, just as we may in judging an acquaintance. But a wary reader soon begins to know when to be trustful and when critical.

When we have found writers whom we can trust, we find then that we are no longer tied to our one life, to our little narrow strip of time and space and, in the company of such guides we can, and do, shake off the dust of every day and see and hear with freshened senses.

When you read *Wuthering Heights* it is as if you yourself have felt the changing seasons on the Yorkshire moors; the cold spring snow has chilled you, you have felt the hot summer sun beating down on your shoulders. Read *Moby Dick*, and you know the roll and stagger of a driven ship. *War and Peace* can take you to the scented summer forests, or make you see the flames redden the sky as Moscow burns. Read books that are real, that are written with the sincere artist's passion for the truth, and you come back knowing that you have felt, seen, and experienced things that, in the body, no one individual can ever know. With the new life that you have shared comes delight, even if the experience has been in part tragic, and there comes to you a sense of having gained insight, sympathy, and experience.

The artist does not of course always take us far away. Sometimes it is something very much like our own life that is shown us, and, as we read, we look back at our own memories and recognise that he is showing us again what we ourselves had once seen and felt; experiences and moods, hopes and fears, now half forgotten. Things we had allowed to become commonplace were, we find, really the stuff of poetry—beautiful, subtle, noble, or tragic. This heightening of our own perception, this fresh recognition, is one of the main aspects of the artistic experience. Shelley the poet used the word 'beauty' when he spoke of the sort of thing that the artist reveals. He said that: 'Under the influence of beauty the soul opens itself, as flowers open under the influence of sunshine.' He went on to say that what our natures receive, when thus opened, is wisdom. There are many others who have affirmed the same thing, at their centre the arts speak to the hidden parts of our nature and nourish us at our point of greatest need.

If even part of this is so, then it follows that to put yourself in the way of receiving beauty may be a much wiser

thing to do and much more practical as an equipment for life than to acquire facts, to read, say, the geography of a country you mean to visit, or that *Handbook of Plumbing*.

We can usually get a plumber in to clear the sink waste, the country to be visited will show itself as the ship nears the shore, but we cannot get in an expert to give us wisdom. Yet wisdom is what we need at the turning points of our own lives or those of the people we love. At these turning points, which may come on us as suddenly as thunder-claps, each of us has to rely on whatever stock of wisdom we have managed to store up, and whatever consolation we have laid in for our own nourishment. As life goes on, most of us find that we still need more understanding and more experience, more food for our own spirit than we can easily come by, circumscribed and limited as each of us must be, by time, place, and our own inadequacy.

Fortunately, the world of books, if your native tongue happens to be English, is immensely rich, for all through our history great poets and writers have drawn on the eternal sources of feeling, and have hoarded up a great treasure for us.

There is much more than information to be got out of books, so much more, that we may, when we fully enter into our heritage, be in danger of despising the useful, the necessary, books of information, or even those betwixt and between books, the biographies to which the reader was so earnestly recommended in Chapter Seven.

III

The random ideas that I have here tried to express about the value of the arts are of course widely held.

Lord David Cecil, himself a fine stylist and a skilled biographer, states many of the same points with commendable clearness.

"No person can ever know in practice what it is like to be both a man and a woman, a mystic and a materialist, a criminal and a pillar of society, an ancient Roman and a modern Russian. But books can teach us to be all these things in imagination."

He goes on to argue, as I have just done, that such experience through the arts is, in some ways at least, actually richer and more valuable than are the experiences of real life; this may be because the insight of some poet or great writer may be greater than our own, and because, by his art, he opens our eyes. Lord David Cecil on this question instances especially the artist's handling of things that are in actual life frustrating or tragic.

Swift's bitterness against mankind, the sordid worlds that some writers show us, are, he goes on, without question shocking in themselves, yet, he suggests that we should not enjoy Swift's satires more if he had liked human beings better. Why is this? He suggests that the answer is '. . . A dark and paradoxical mystery in whose shadow lurks the whole question of the fundamental significance of art . . .' Tragedy, or the frustrating and disagreeable are, in the hand of the artist, transmuted, and become 'precious and illuminating'.

"Surely the answer is to be found in the fact that the soul is born instinctively desiring order, harmony, and beauty, but finds herself in a world disorderly dissonant and in a great part ugly. Our joy is deeper in proportion as we are induced to accept what we normally find unacceptable, in proportion as the vision presented to us by the artist includes aspects of life which in our every-day existence distress us. For then his (the artist's) creation of a work of art represents a more signal and extraordinary victory over the ills of our mortal condition."

Lord David Cecil has stated I believe an exceedingly important point here and one that we should consider further because of a current trend. In spite of the great popular success of trivial books about violence (such as our imaginary shocker *Murder on the Back Stairs*), there is another large public which rejects the unpleasant. The reader who has advanced a little further in the art of reading than our tired woman, is apt to feel that a 'good' book ought to be about a pleasant subject. Thus we find, in our lending libraries, a whole world of middling-good readers and middling-good writers who stick to what seems, on the surface, pleasant, and which may only too easily become merely trivial and genteel. These readers and writers are, out of timidity, and out of a very proper boredom with the violent triviality of *Murder on the Back Stairs*, avoiding something that could make their joint enterprise more fruitful. They are avoiding the 'dark paradox'. A book which is a work of art should obviously not deliberately avoid what is elegant, pleasant and agreeable. To believe that is as great a fallacy as to suppose—with the Puritans—that we should avoid such things in our own lives. There is quite obviously a perfectly genuine and direct enjoyment in the contemplation of everything that is pleasant. But Lord David Cecil has put very clearly something that deeply concerns us as readers and writers. There is a sense of victory, a sense of daring and of added dignity, which can reward the reader and writer who can face and use the griefs and ills of our mortal state.

IV

John Cowper Powys, moving on a little from the points raised by Lord David Cecil—moving between the world as we get it in a work of art, and the world as we experience

it directly—is a writer who affirms that there is also this very same element of triumph in our delight in what is obviously good, beautiful, and agreeable, and not least if what is good is also simple or comparatively trivial.

"We are not only happy because we are thrilled by the contemplation of a branch against the sky, or a range of hills against the horizon, or by the stimulus of a cup of coffee, or by the exquisite sweetness of bread-and-honey; we are also happy because, in the immediate consciousness of the pleasure we derive from these things, we get the glow of victory. Life in us, at these moments, overcomes Death; good overcomes evil."

V

Such then are some, but by no means all, of the things that can be got from the kind of art that can be shut up between the covers of a book. We have said nothing about poetry, which is the most compact, memorable, and also the deepest of the forms taken by the writer's art, and we have also said nothing about the pleasure that we can get from language itself.

I want in fact, at this point, to drop the main theme of this chapter, which has been a halting attempt to analyse some part of the value of the arts to those of us who know that they are hungry, weary, and in search of wisdom.

I want to leave it for two reasons, partly because the attempt to get nearer the real content of the arts is one that is bound to be unsatisfactory—as Karsavina pointed out—unless the actual medium of one of the arts is used, and partly because Mr. Powys has here touched upon a second aspect of the subject. What he hints at here is the thing in which Dorothy Wordsworth specialised, something which we have in this book called the activity of the

half-artist, the vivid awareness, which grows in the hearts and heads of those of us who are sensitive to natural or man-made beauty, but who have perhaps never written a line, drawn a stroke on paper, or played a single musical note.

Mr. Powys instances a 'branch against the sky', but it may be to something else that we are sensitive: the turn of a child's head, or its sweet treble voice, or indeed it may be almost any of the sounds and sensations of every day to which we respond with delight and understanding. Or it may indeed be to something which we do not take in directly with eyes or ears. It may be a vivid realisation of our own, or of another person's feelings at some moment of drama. These are all, as we know, the stuff with which the artist works.

What I want to emphasise here is that we all experience these things to some extent, and that we can and should extend our sensitiveness to them, that they are to some of us what works of art are to others and that, like works of art, they can and will add to the richness of our lives even if our inability to use the tools of the artist make it difficult to pass on what we have felt. Mr. Powys believes that we neglect these things, starve ourselves of them, and—whimsically—he puts in a special word for the simplest, most prosaic or apparently childish of them.

"In the life of our Western world today, it is astonishing what little pleasure we get from eating and drinking, what little pleasure from going to sleep and waking up, what little pleasure from bathing in hot or cold water, from making a lather with a piece of soap, from putting on our back underclothes fresh from washing, from noting the yellow sunlight upon our bedroom-wall, or the frost-marks upon our window-pane, or the flight of sea-gulls over the roofs, or the chirping of sparrows in bare branches, or the smell of the sea or of inland moors carried upon the

wind, or the faint sounds of sirens from the harbour—I say it is astonishing, and an evidence of sheer psychic stupidity, what little pleasure we get from these things."

When we were children we all experienced these natural pleasures keenly, and fortunately most adults have not lost beyond recall this power of feeling delight. Lack of leisure and a striving after mechanical efficiencies are the holes through which such delight seeps away. We, who are in danger of losing our natural delight, who sometimes feel ourselves choked by what a Chinese poet called 'the world's dust' can regain much of what we have let slip. We shall find it a great refreshment, for instance, to be with people who have still kept the child's awareness, and who have not let it be tarnished and dimmed by this dust of every day. Perhaps you have this faculty yourself? Or perhaps this is what you seek in the company of children or of certain of your friends, whose attraction for you seems difficult to explain? If you have it in yourself, if you know where to find it in those around you, go on seeking it out. How delightful is the eye that can see a comic turn of events, the mind that can enjoy the small pleasure, see the beauty of the sun gleaming on a wet road, or see the wit in some commonplace incident. Cultivate these things, go on seeking them out in others, and remember that we have none of us really lost all touch with such pleasure, for we should be dead if we had.

Yet, alas, we are often exiles from that world if only for a time. Sometimes we can only remember with an effort how the magic worked on a few memorable occasions—we remember the start of a journey, the coming out into the blessed fresh air after an illness, a scene from childhood comes back to us, remembered we don't know why; or perhaps what you remember is the morning when you dressed for your wedding? For all of us there do remain

some of these moments when time stood still and, with sharpened senses, we saw, heard, and felt. Give yourself time, give yourself at least a few little rests from your responsibilities and your worries, let the magic of the common world around you work anew.

Children are to many of us the surest source through whose medium we can draw upon this deep refreshment. If we will let them, if we can really listen and can make ourselves receptive to what children have to teach us, if we can sit back and stop feeling responsible all the time, it is the children who, next to the artists, have the greatest share of this magical power of direct participation. We must remember this subtle aspect of give-and-take and must get from our children as well as give to them. 'Parents,' says A. S. Neill, 'should not sacrifice themselves for the new generation. Rather should they join the new generation and renew their youth.'

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Some Unwritten Chapters

NOW that the end of the book is near I want to explain to the reader why it seemed best to leave out a number of chapters that might well have found a place in a book of this sort. I regret some of these unwritten chapters, but some I was glad to dodge.

II

There might well have been a chapter called 'Sons and Daughters', for a great part of the art of being any individual woman may be the art needed in handling relations with children at various ages. There would have been something to say about the woman who says she prefers her children while they are still babies, or who, proud to have a son, when this wanted boy is between nine and fifteen, yet finds that he is awkward and prickly and unaccountable beyond her expectation.

Then, too, there is the mother who has been a beauty—still is one perhaps—and who, to her horror, finds that she is jealous rather than proud of a lovely daughter. But the topic of Sons and Daughters is one for a different book. It is, for once, the Mother herself whom we are considering.

III

There is the same difficulty about writing a chapter on Husbands. We have said a good deal about them already,

but obviously a great many further points might have been discussed. Yet since the world outside the home affects home life, if we had begun a chapter on husbands, we should have found ourselves also discussing all manner of trades and professions and the particular stresses and strains that they produce. We should have to consider factory foremen, doctors, lawyers, clerks, farm workers, and bankers. And then we should have to take at least a glance at our husbands' Mothers. There's a big factor! No, decidedly, the subject of husbands is also one for a whole book. Here we will do little more than summarise a few things that have already been said in passing.

It was said that a change was noticeable in the attitude of some of the bolder, less conventional young husbands of today, who want their wives to 'stay human', just as an older generation wanted them to stay pretty. Yet a man—particularly a rather conventional or (on the other hand) a very sensitive man, may fear ridicule if he undertakes jobs that he would be perfectly willing to do if he were free. He really may be considered as allowing himself to be hen-pecked, if it is noticed that he demands less total-waiting-on than the other men with whom he works, or if he shows obvious pleasure and interest in his own small children. Your husband, that is to say, may look to you a good deal freer than he really is. Don't forget this.

Something was also said about the difficulties of husbands and wives who have drifted out of sympathy, and I promised to try to justify a passing remark that it was the business of the wife to take the first steps towards making things better. I believe this for the simple reason that there really is this long tradition about 'feminine intuition, and because it is widely believed that we are better at understanding other human beings than men. Beliefs—valid or not—are facts. Your husband may, to begin with,

really have had more insight of this sort than you, but, because you were brought up as a girl, and he as a boy, because you so often had to go round about (as was suggested in the first chapter), you will have had more practice in managing a human relationship. I shall not, as many people might, add that the wife also has more to gain by getting this vital warmth back into a marriage, for I myself think that men, who often have much monotony and many disappointments and sometimes shocks to their pride to put up with in their working lives, need this life-giving and supporting warmth quite as much as we do. I fancy that they suffer as much, and get damaged as much as we do, if they can't get it. Men are brought up to be less spontaneous and articulate than women, and a wife may never understand (unless she sets her sympathy and affection to work) her husband's real hurts and disappointments. Have you noticed how much men value spontaneity and 'naturalness' in women? Their own training and work often hammers this quality out of them, so they seek it in a partner. They may seem hard—like steel—but because they have had this hammering they often tend to be more brittle and more easily damaged than we are. Let me repeat, unless we have had the really unusual bad luck or bad judgment to marry a Don Juan or a Peer Gynt, our husbands need all the affection that we can give them. If this book were addressed to men, and not to women, I should add one piece of good and very hackneyed advice to husbands as well as advising them to read this book. Do, I should say, remember to do something or to say something, when you feel warm and affectionate towards your wife. Your training as a high-minded Englishman has probably made you a regular oyster and an expert at concealing your feelings. Also, because the subject of feelings has been taboo, it has not made you very observant of other people. Do try to notice when your wife needs

practical help or moral support. At the same time don't be shocked because your wife's training has allowed her to remain freer to express her feelings. In the give-and-take of daily life with you this will mean that she will enjoy getting a fairly clear response from you. She may be very intuitive, but don't assume that she is a complete mind-reader. Luckily for you, she is not. So, for the sake of the love you will get back, make sure that she knows it whenever you think she looks charming, and whenever you feel—for no reason at all—that she is a nice creature.

IV

It would have been helpful and amusing to write a chapter on Snobbery and to write it with some malice. A young woman could get a good deal of light on every-day current problems by taking a look at the rather different code of behaviour that governed the doings, and thus modified the character of aristocratic women when I was a girl.

This curious aristocratic code, though it had its bad points, also had its good ones. With a few judicious suppressions it could be used against the snobbish, but essentially middle-class, pressure that often irks girls today.

For instance, aristocratic women were by no means supposed to be hot-house plants. They were expected to have plenty of physical courage. They were supposed to be very brave indeed in the hunting field, to make light of bad weather, and not too much fuss over a broken bone. Out in the garden they were not expected to be dainty about digging, worms, or manure, or lazy about tough roots or shifting big stones. Old tweeds, heavy shoes, and thick stockings were an essential part of their equipment. It was a tough country code and the town-bred woman, who did not understand this and who shuddered at dirt or dis-

liked mice, was often treated to a raised eyebrow and felt, or said, to be, 'A little middle class'.

The lady was expected to have a genuine social life of her own, which need not necessarily conform to the tastes of her husband. He could be sporting or political, she could —indoors—prefer to be a patron of music or literature. While she should, of course, entertain her husband's friends, it was also a matter of course that she should entertain her own. Sometimes she was the political one, or the sporting one. Just as naturally, and just as much as a matter of course, Lord X could give as much time and trouble to the arts or scholarship as he pleased.

The aristocratic pair were in fact much less bound than are the conventional middle-class pair today by rigid ideas of what was proper to each sex. If the lady of the house disliked domestic affairs and liked to be out in all weathers she made no bones about saying so and acting accordingly, or on the other hand, could give her free time to being a patroness of one of the arts. She had duties and was expected to show a good deal of leadership, and was apt to be criticised if she did no public work. She also had to come up to a fairly elastic standard of being a good wife and mother, which included being a wise adviser on the ways of the world to children who were nearly grown up. For the rest she was free either to stump about alone in thick boots with a pair of garden shears or a curry-comb, to make her own social or artistic circle, or collect her own library of books. If, in middle age, she became rather an oddity, she might well be liked all the better; anyhow, it was thought much worse to be insipid.

That world was, however, an unjust one. Her freedom bred callousness because it rested too much on the exploitation of other people; it was a world to which I, for one, would not choose to go back. But, all the same, it makes me smile when snobbish women who think they are

being upper-class are shocked or pretend to be shocked at clothes, behaviour, or ideas that may very likely be entirely right according to the real aristocratic code. You may see groups of such snobbish but unknowing women today, always a little over-dressed, always a little too townified in the lounges of expensive provincial hotels. So, reader, don't be too unkind, for these women, like you and me, are creatures of their environment, but, all the same, remember, when hard pressed, that it may be possible to fight middle-class snobbishness with its own weapons and to outsnob foolish critics who are very likely slightly ill-bred. Apart, however, from these malicious reflections, the real aristocratic tradition is anyhow worth examining because—like the war record of the mass of British women—it throws further light on that obscure point, what women are 'really like' when they are free to develop.

V

Another chapter might have been one on a very different subject—the History of the British Working Class. The point of this chapter would have been to show the curiously close likeness between the arguments that are still used today against giving women more social consideration, and also shorter hours and better pay, and those that were used against giving these things to the whole of the working class of Britain.

The fact that the anti-working-class arguments turned out to be wrong, is one that we need hardly discuss. Yet, as was suggested in an earlier chapter, as long as the workers of this country were seriously oppressed, they really did show many of the bad qualities that the smug, possessing classes noticed in them. Today the whole nation benefits, in every sphere, from the talents, the powers of leadership, and the resourcefulness of workers who have

rid themselves of a great part of the old burden. The idea that we should go back is unthinkable, and not just on philanthropic or humanitarian grounds, but because, if the old state of things was restored, the greatest source of national energy would be lost.

Only a hundred, or even seventy years ago, however, it was seriously argued that to shorten working hours in factories, or to improve the shocking conditions of the private soldier or the seaman, or to educate the children of working-class families would be harmful. If the children were given education they would be unwilling to work. If the working man had leisure he would not know what to do with it. The seaman or the private soldier could only be kept in order if he worked hard for poor pay and could be savagely punished.

A royal commission before which John Ruskin gave evidence asked him if he could say why it was that 'the labouring class' did not visit the newly opened museums and picture galleries? To which Ruskin—an intelligent man—replied that it was because working hours were too long. After so much toil 'the mind becomes languid with labour'.

There was a parliamentary debate in 1847 on a Factory Bill to reduce working hours to ten, from the then usual twelve, fourteen, or sometimes sixteen a day, and to make Saturday a half-day. A number of members of both houses opposed the bill. One member said that :

"in his opinion, the working class *preferred* the longer hours. Why should industrious men be restrained from working twelve hours a day if they desire to do it?"

Another member pointed out that:

"if it was proposed to give the working man leisure, the House must ask itself—would he really use it for his

moral and spiritual advantage? Mr. Speaker, if the working man gets Saturday afternoon off, where will he spend it? In the Public House!"

"Lord John Russell" [another Opposition speaker remarked] "has said that he supports this bill on the grounds of the Moral and Mental Cultivation of the Labouring Class. . . . But can we be certain that good results will follow? What we *can* be certain of is that such a reduction of hours will take the entire profits out of industry!"

We know now that all this was rubbish. Yet while factory workers, seamen, and private soldiers were underprivileged—till they got 'Time to be human'—it really may have been difficult to know whether they were inferior or not. But certain gifted and energetic working men had faith, they were sure that their fellow workers were not inferior; also, to their credit, a few of the rich and powerful believed this too. The Factory Bill passed. . . . Slowly, slowly—it ha staken a hundred years to get to where we are now—the mass of men got at least *some* of the opportunities that had been so narrowly reserved for the few. The result from the national point of view has been the setting free of a great variety of talents and skills, and a great increase in human well-being. The whole nation has gained by the faith of those agitators and those reformers.

Perhaps, if women followed the example of these men . . .?

VI

Turn to quite a different topic. There might well have been a chapter on Clothes and Make-up, for I trust the reader does not agree with the point quoted by John Knox, or think that women should dress badly? Also, more might have been said about the planning, the strategy and

tactics of doing the actual work of running a home. But these chapters were omitted for very good reasons. There are, published weekly, hundreds of thousands of copies of a number of excellent women's papers. In these there are to be found plenty of practical articles on these entertaining and necessary topics, and they are topics which cannot be half so well dealt with in a book. For one reason they are seasonal, the reader wants to read the instructions when she is dealing with the problem—spring cleaning or the storage of winter clothes makes dull reading at Christmas. Also, they belong to the magazines because advice on such matters must be completely up to date. I picked up a book the other day on dress and make-up. Though it was only two years since it was published it already seemed slightly dated. This was sad, for it was a sensible book. If you don't generally read women's papers I recommend you to have a look at the nearest bookstall. If you compare such journals you will find that they cater for different income-groups and types. One was described to me by a woman journalist as being 'for the Cathedral-Close type'. Others are for busier, others for lonelier, others for more fashionable women. Others again are for those with less to spend. A further point against including that chapter in this book is the most important of all. The articles in these journals are usually each written by an expert in the particular subject dealt with, whether it is putting on make-up or making marmalade, and on these subjects I am not an expert, only one who can carry out instructions after a fashion.

VII

Another is a chapter that was only begun—and it was to have been one on Town Planning. As my architect husband often points out, the actual structure of our houses

and the arrangements of our streets and of those streets as they are combined into suburbs and towns, has a strong and lasting effect on our way of life. An old and valued friend of his—the late Professor Sir Charles Reilley—believed that, for instance, the way in which our houses have been grouped for the last hundred and fifty years, is a way which makes co-operation between households, freedom from worry for the housewife, and a cheerful community life, particularly difficult. What he suggested is that we might try going back to an older country planning tradition—that of a group of houses round the modern equivalent of a village green. The green would be a safe place where small children could play in sight of their homes and away from traffic dangers, the houses being approached by an encircling road. He was a man who was strongly of the opinion that women ought to have time to be human, and he realised that some of our problems could be solved by more co-operation. This sort of grouping would, he believed, make such co-operation easier. It is already obvious, for instance, that if there were a large safe place in which her children could be left to play, a woman might well feel that it was not too much to ask a neighbour to keep an eye on them while she went to do the shopping, while she might hesitate if there were no common playing place or one which was out of the way. Nor would she feel it much burden when it came to her turn to do the minding. He felt, too, that with a number of such green-groups, arranged like the petals of a daisy round a community centre, it would be easier to contrive something ambitious on the lines of what was suggested here in an earlier chapter—that is for neighbours to buy and use expensive equipment in common. For instance, all the tenants of a group of 'Reilley Greens' might feel able and inclined to club together and gradually equip an up-to-date little laundry, go in for the convenience of 'deep freeze' or a

children's play-room. He envisaged, too, the possible development of something on the lines of a community kitchen and restaurant which would also send out meals, and perhaps of a communal staff of home-helps equipped with the latest things in electrical polishing and cleaning tools.

District heating and piped rubbish collection are other quite practical services that come into the field of architecture and town planning.

Such ideas, including Reilley Greens, have, my husband tells me, been put into practice in various places. I saw blocks of flats in Sweden equipped with some of them, and the deep-freeze idea, for example, is used in America. Women will need to use discrimination here, for it is possible to carry co-operation too far. Part of the purpose of setting up a home at all is to achieve privacy, but there is no doubt that, in this matter of town planning, we have not explored all the possibilities. Many people think that we have, for instance, let the claims of transport develop at the expense of our need for peace and quiet, and that we have not sufficiently considered the needs of children.

VIII

If all these six chapters had really been written, a book which set out to concern 'The Art of Being a Woman' would have become that fatal thing—a book about everything in general.

It has come dangerously near to being that already. Already we have found it necessary to consult experts on a great variety of subjects. We have called in poets and the Trades Union Council, biographers, experts on the history of dress, psychiatrists, anthropologists, historians, girls who drove tractors or minded planing-machines,

mothers in New Zealand and Australia, and Women's Institute members in Britain, not to speak of John Knox, St. Teresa, and a flock of novelists and dramatists.

IX

There is one last unborn chapter—a chapter on Sex that has remained unwritten for quite other and different reasons. The sex side of courtship and marriage, the falling in and out of love, the warmth or coldness of women as sex partners, the courtship techniques of men, all have a great deal to do with the main topic that we have been discussing.

A marriage may be happy or unhappy, and a woman's life successful or unsuccessful, largely according to whether the physical aspect of sex does or does not satisfy both partners.

Then why, in a book of this sort, ignore it? Why not write a chapter about it? The reasons are two.

The first is a respectable one. Happy and satisfactory sex relations depend on the characters of the persons concerned, and if this book has drawn attention to nothing else, it has at least suggested the immense variety of human nature. So, if the writer does not know the reader, still less the reader's partner, the limit to what can usefully be said is very soon reached. The present writer is doubtful if there is more than one thing that can be said to everyone. That one thing is that physical sex should never be divorced from love, yet if a writer could ever be accused of giving a glimpse of the obvious it would be in making a remark like that.

But, even if this lack of things that could usefully be said to everyone could be proved to be an illusion, there remains the second reason for leaving out this particular chapter. This second reason is not at all respectable, and

throws a lurid light on the mess our civilisation has got into. A book containing such a chapter would be regarded with a special kind of slightly embarrassed and superstitious feeling. It might be read more eagerly than a book in which no taboos were broken, but it will be hidden away. It might even be really damaging to an individual reader because he or she might be already in a 'state' about this whole emotionally charged question. Sex really is, probably, a highly emotional subject, and not one on which anybody need seek to feel entirely cool and objective. But today, by our rules, and by our breaking of those rules, by our prudery and our prurience, we have exacerbated the true feeling (that there is something very special about sex) into a condition which often borders on that of nervous breakdown.

If you think these remarks are exaggerated, please consider just one symptom of our neurotic attitude—the smutty story—a topic mostly avoided by women. The smutty or 'blue' story has flourished significantly since mid-Victorian times, and it is the uneasy hostile story. The roar of laughter with which it is greeted is uneasy laughter, the laugh of people who cannot keep away from a subject, and who are yet ashamed of their own preoccupation with it, and therefore like to see it treated as trivial. They are hostile to sex and that sort of story brings it down a peg.

There is not much need, however, to labour this point to a woman reader. Women are, on the whole, not so neurotic or not neurotic in this particular way about sex, and therefore we rarely tell each other smutty stories. True, the misfortunes of sex and, in general, the absurd side of love do often make us smile, but we are less hostile, and thus less uneasy about it. Yet because of the taboo a woman would hesitate to leave lying about a book that contained a frank chapter on physical sex, and, as things

are, she would be right. Yet what would be the use of a carefully censored chapter?

So there is the main and rather discreditable reason for leaving such a chapter unwritten. Being concerned with the main taboo-subject of our civilisation, it would stand out from the rest of the book, it would leave many readers faintly uneasy, and thus less able to consider objectively the rest of the problems raised.

To produce this effect would be, according to the latest view even of the psychiatrists, to give a false picture, and not to represent the true balance of affairs.

The problems of physical love, important as they are, are yet (so most Freudians now seem to hold) secondary to many other things. The most modern view is that, for instance, failure or success will often have its origins early in life and go back to the relations of parents and children. Sex life, like everything else is, it seems, a part of our total personality, and also a part of a social whole, and it is with this total personality and with this social whole, and the part that we women play in it, that this book is concerned.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Good-bye Reader

A GREAT many subjects have been touched on in this book. That was inevitable, for the thread that we have been following—the art of being a woman in our particular kind of community at the present time—runs through the whole life of that community.

In following this thread a purpose has been kept in mind; we have not only been trying to take stock, but also to discuss practical ways by which we might increase our own happiness, and by so doing increase the happiness and well-being of those we love, and thus of the community.

Many points have been considered: we have heard it said by a psychiatrist that to have a human sacrifice in the house is unlikely to make a home a happy one, and we have cited evidence to show that to have an oppressed class or race forming part of a community does not make for a good life, for it is apt to harm both those who dominate and those who are dominated.

We found that it was essential for us, as women, to try to understand our relations to society as a whole. It seemed that where some change in that relation was called for, it was not just a matter of trying to improve ourselves or to bring up our children better, important as these might be.

We found that we might feel called upon, once we had examined the matter, to see what we could do in the way

of changing Public Opinion, or what an anthropologist would call The Culture Pattern, and that we might feel impelled to try to do this, not simply for our own sakes, but also for that of our husbands, sons, and brothers.

We found that, though they seem so solid and formidable, all customs and traditions do not run right through the whole of our community and that they do not stand still. It seemed that our own influence could and should sometimes be a formative one, for we saw that though there are many changes for the good, there are also irresponsible tendencies at work.

From our point of view, among the best changes have been the technical advances which have made the total weight of human labour much less. What economists call 'production per man hour' has soared. Furthermore, we saw that technical and scientific advances now mean that we each have a much longer expectation of vigorous life, and therefore of years which may be productive in an excellent way but which may be wasted if, as individuals or as a community, we put thought of them aside.

All this seemed to mean that both men and women need a new outlook on a number of things and that, in order to benefit from so much that is new and hopeful, we need to adapt some of our habits as well as our ways of thought.

One point which is new and important to women seemed to emerge. We may be able at present to do more to help the community to get the best out of the new technical changes than men. It may well be easier for us than it is for them to think out the new problems because, as has been seen, we were, and to some extent still remain, rather outside the old structure of society. As what Virginia Woolf calls outsiders we perhaps see the new problems more clearly and we have a personal motive for being alert because we also seem personally less likely to benefit —even in the short run—by sticking to old ways.

III

Another new point, a point supplementary to the last, seemed to come out. The changes that need to be made seem to be changes in spheres which men have, in the past, tended to neglect, but that were thought of as belonging to women. The old phrase 'feminine intuition' was not coined for nothing, though it seems doubtful whether women really have more of it than men. Owing to our circumstances, however, women have learned to be quick, to pick out and to understand what is called 'the human element' in a problem. We have been, that is, far less observant than men, indeed highly unoriginal, about mechanical things, over which we have had little control, but we have been—perhaps for that reason—more observant about people.

Mankind has now come to a stage in human history when we are very near to solving most of the problems connected with 'things'.

By means of science and technics great victories have been won, man has conquered an indifferent and often hostile Nature—all except Human Nature.

In almost every field of life it is now 'Human Nature', the human element that presents the major problem. The greatest, of course, the biggest problem of all, is war, the ghastly possibility of the Atom Bomb added to the horrors we have known. In war it is the hostility of human beings to each other which is carried to its most desperate extreme.

Turning to less alarming things we again find that in most spheres the new problems are again human. Production, in factories and mines, turns out, at this stage, to be not so much technical as a matter of incentives. In the medical world, the use of asepsis and of anæsthesia has solved technical problems of surgery that used to baffle

us, but there remain—still often intractable—the psychological problems of health.

IV

There is a Victorian saying that 'the last thing that man will civilise is woman'. Today few men or women are altogether satisfied or pleased with the products of our civilisation. So today perhaps we may all hope that the Victorian saying is true. Men and women alike might feel glad, if it were indeed true, that half the human race in the West really does stand thus a little outside what has so far been called civilisation. Civilisation as we know it has built up splendid technical achievements but has incautiously overlooked the human element. Our chance as women has perhaps come if we are indeed 'the last thing that man will civilise'.

V

All the same we have seen here that women cannot be complacent. We can see with half an eye that the old evils have marked us for ill, even if they may also have marked us for good. We have not been quite trusted, therefore we do not quite trust ourselves; nearly all of us carry some inconvenient marks of the slave-collar—whether set with diamonds or plain—that has been for so long round our necks. Because of this, most of us do not feel that we are fitted to lift up our voices even if it has been agreed that we might possibly be allowed to do so. We are so unused to feeling responsible for anything so large as 'the State of Society' that the 'Woman in the Street' is doggedly and sometimes sullenly inclined to mind her own business. Our fault is not always just over-modesty either. There exists a certain brand of quiet, feminine cynicism. The woman I have in mind is the woman who says nothing at a

meeting but strolls up and wishes the speaker luck after it is over. The speaker suggests that, if she agrees, she herself might 'do something'. She smiles, and says 'What me?'

A whole long history lies behind her 'What me?' It is part of English history, and part of the story of her childhood. The Irish and the Indians of less than a generation ago would have understood her only too well. Cynicism, self-distrust, a shrug of the shoulders, a feeling of being powerless, of being in short a 'member of the club of Outsiders', are among the feelings compressed into those two words.

There are of course also sensible feelings behind it.

Because of the insight into human nature that we have had to acquire, some of us realise first, that the wrong person can easily do a cause more harm than good; second, that roots of the troubles aired at meetings often lie much deeper than speakers seem to know or care to acknowledge.

The detached woman is thus sometimes right in her thinking, but I suggest she is wrong to sit still and do nothing. She thinks, and she should contribute the results of her thinking to the common pool of thought, and she is mistaken in believing that she can really hold aloof, because, as has been proved here, there is really no keeping out. We are each part of 'Public Opinion', part of a family, or part of a group of people working together, so the influence of that cynical woman does tell, however silent she may choose to be. In this larger sense Virginia Woolf was wrong when she said we were 'outsiders', for men, women, and children are all in the same boat.

VI

But let us continue, as well as we can, to sum up the things that have already been set out for the reader's consideration. Many of us, those of us who are most unhappy

and most feel the need of change—maladjusted is the word the psychologists use—need skilled help, and skilled help with our deeper problems is usually impossible to get. This fact is yet another proof of the way in which our society has put 'things' before people. It was suggested that we could at least give ourselves a rough-and-ready sort of preventive first aid, and might be able to help ourselves by arranging the details of our lives a little better.

But since, in order to do this, we may have to go, to some extent, against tradition, we have got to believe that the task is worth while, to believe for instance that we have a right to devote to it a certain amount of our own time, thought, and energy and a share of the family money. An important point that we have seen is that a blind and unthinking unselfishness has been demanded of women by tradition. A major contention here has been that unselfishness is not enough, indeed that it is sometimes just as disastrously unsuccessful as is hard unthinking selfishness.

VII

This point—about unselfishness—was put forward here by a psychiatrist. But we have seen facts that suggest that the psychiatrists who seek to help individuals have not necessarily got the whole answer. Let me put the point again. They often use their own word, 'maladjusted', in a sense which implies to the listener or reader that the person spoken of 'ought' to adjust themselves to the given circumstances. We have seen facts that suggest that, on the other hand, it may be the circumstances, and not the 'maladjusted' person which should be changed.

This idea is not of course a new one, and is indeed more generally held than its opposite. It is what we may call the 'political' point of view. Those who hold it strongly

often get very impatient with those who, either from a religious or psychological point of view, talk about 'change of heart' and who say that 'recovery begins within'. It is the belief of the present writer that both aspects of the problem almost always need to be tackled and that which should come first will always depend on circumstances.

This belief, that neither political nor religious nor psychiatric views should stand alone, has been formed during the course of a longish life spent in contact with many kinds of people, and in a study of the histories of many kinds of human enterprise.

Such a standpoint is, like all moderate views, rather difficult to defend, for the dispute between the two sides often gets heated. 'Does the pig make the sty or does the sty make the pig?' people ask each other crossly. Why, we may ask back, not tackle both the sty and the pig?

The important practical consequence of believing this moderate view is that you will also arrive at the conclusion that this job of trying to adjust mankind to society and society to mankind is not just a task for specialists. One of the wisest of our novelists, E. M. Forster, urges us to keep our thinking, feeling, and doing together, and he uses as a sort of slogan, the words, 'Connect, Connect'. He means, I take it, what has been repeatedly suggested here, that we shall not tackle the job of improving our environment in the right way if we are blindly ignorant of our own motives and feelings. For instance, we shall be unsuccessful in our efforts to improve the community if we favour change because we are warped, unhappy, and angry. On the other hand, a personal effort to put ourselves in better shape is hampered if it is undertaken by itself. A generous and resolute attempt to make a better fit between the community and the individual is what seems to be needed and especially to make things better for the young people who are the heirs of our actions.

VIII

Bent on self-improvement, we found that we had each of us studied our faces in the glass often enough—that was easy. To look with any sort of candour at our own characters turned out to be more difficult. But we found that there are tricks in this trade as in others. Another thing came out; each of us has special needs, so that there is no such thing as what newspaper reporters like to call 'the secret of a successful life', something which can be whispered to everyone—there is not even some one thing that can be whispered to all seventeen million of us British women. 'The art of being a woman' has turned out to be, above all, the art of being one particular woman.

It was also contended that for an individual to have a fairly clear idea of what she is like and what she needs, though it does not solve the whole problem, makes the task easier. Even the first step helps, and the first step in self-knowledge is often, for women, an admission that she really has personal needs.

Later, a good deal of emphasis was put on the value of various forms of art, and especially, for practical reasons, of the arts that are shut up between the covers of books.

IX

We spoke also of the pleasure of the search for knowledge, and we have tried to answer the question 'What sort of knowledge?' Here the differences between individuals will be particularly important. One will love knowledge for its own sake, another will insist on having a practical end in view.

It is most important for the reader who happens to be in search of the kind of knowledge which will be of help in her own deep problems, to remember that religion,

psychology, and the arts are the only three traditions or 'disciplines' which can give us added experience and understanding of the strongest of our common human experiences. Other kinds of knowledge, other expressions of the human spirit, are both delightful and important, but the other they all pass by—the great experiences that come to us all. These strong experiences are birth, death, love, pain, and joy. The arts, religion, and a study of psychology are the only things that can help us to understand our feelings and that can link our strangest experiences to the long uneventful stretches of our lives. Poetry is said to be 'emotion remembered in tranquillity' and it is very necessary that links between experience and tranquillity should exist. The great emotions must be kept in mind. I am not sure that we should even quite let go of grief till we have learned all we can in its hard school.

X

As we followed our thread, we saw that the difficulties that press upon us as women appeared only to be special forms of the difficulties that press upon all human beings. If you find yourself frustrated, be sure that the man whom you envy has his frustrations too. Because you and I, as women, are to some extent 'outsiders' in the land of our birth, because we may be 'the last thing that man will civilise' we have, I repeat, in some ways a better chance of seeing, understanding, and solving the problems that beset us all. Our reason for wanting to solve these problems is not only a personal one. There are among us, growing fast, the next generation, the healthiest lot of children that have ever been reared. As women it should be our pleasure to try to make this a world in which their health and brains can come to the best possible fulfilment.

XI

What is the technique and what are the rules in the world today about such things as courage, intelligence, knowledge, and a sense of fun if you are a woman? We see that we may admit to ourselves, if not necessarily to other people, that we are as intelligent and as courageous as men. That is not perhaps, we think, saying much? But really when we look back, say at the young men and the girls who were parachuted into enemy territory, or even at a Warden's post in the Blitz, or when we think of the intricate triumphs of modern science it is saying a good deal. What does this admission mean—that we are by nature courageous and intelligent? It means that, on pain of betraying the little girl in the gym tunic, we must not take refuge in the timidity, the dullwittedness, and the mental and physical cowardice that the world will be glad to allow us. Young women must be their own critics, for in this Public Opinion will not help.

Every woman may, however, make open use of any insight she may have into human affairs, of any loving-kindness, any sense of fun, of any fountain of spontaneous nonsense, and any power of downright enjoyment. 'Feminine intuition', spontaneity, gaiety, playfulness, the power of loving, are all things for which Public Opinion is already prepared to praise us. Here are vital and admirable things in which we need not watch our step.

When it comes to enjoyment of the arts, the consolations of religion, the scientific study of the human heart, we shall have to walk warily again. In order to practise an art seriously, to give serious attention to the state of your soul, or to study psychology, time and concentration will be needed, and these necessary things are grudged to women. Women have of course long been supposed to 'go in' for art and religion, but only up to a point. They

can all—even religion—be reduced to being 'elegant accomplishments for females'. It is still not much liked if we in any way inconvenience other people in our pursuit of such things.

It is largely because of the fact that women are so disappointingly expected to stop short, that so many practical points have been emphasised. We must feel that we can demand from life some free cash and some free energy for our private concerns. It should be nobody's business but our own whether the needs of our own natures cause us to use our free time and our share of cash in going to a whist drive, or a religious service, or to a committee meeting, or whether we spend it on one of the arts, in study, in gardening, in seeking our friends, or in just walking about and feeling free.

But which of these things it should be, is very much our own concern. The choice of how to spend this precious freedom to the best advantage is so important that a good deal of experimenting was suggested.

What a married woman may need for some years may, as was said, be just to keep her hand in. On the other hand, a career woman with a rather impersonal job may need something human to offset lack of emotional interest in her work. The price of this sort of freedom, if you are a woman, is eternal vigilance. Public Opinion does not sleep, and there are forces at work that will wrest it from you if they can.

Need we, we ask yet again, be content to put up with Public Opinion as it now stands? Certainly not. A number of points in which it wants changing were suggested, also the parts each of us play, whether we think we do or not, in undermining or in upholding it.

XII

A word or two should perhaps be said in the course of this good-bye summary about the apparent complexity and difficulty of being a woman. I feel I want to beg the reader not to feel it all depressingly difficult, or rather perhaps to remind her how clever she is already, how well qualified to tackle just such problems. I want her to have in mind the excellent skill, the discrimination, she uses when she buys the silks for a piece of embroidery, or knits to an intricate pattern, or cooks a rather special dish. Watch yourself, and you will notice that you don't by any means always prefer what is easy. You rather enjoy difficulties in such matters. This is because all these are arts. Once convinced that the larger art of being a woman is even more worthwhile, once convinced that there is nothing trivial about it, and that it really can be pursued without guilt, its very trickiness becomes stimulating. It can be pursued in the very same spirit of skill and discrimination as these lesser arts—it can be pursued for fun. A measure of success brings the same, but much richer satisfactions.

XIII

Good-bye, Reader. Don't forget nature made women, literally, life givers. Whether we bear children or not, whether we are Christian or agnostic, whether we find ourselves practical or reflective, whether liking the sun or the shade, whether certain of our aims are experimental, whether we are hindered or helped in our outward circumstances, we are by Nature, in the widest sense, creative creatures. About the value of that there can be no doubt. The instinct in every child, the teachings of religion or psychology, and the whole active practise of arts are at one on this.

The relevant Christian text is one quoted earlier: 'I came that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.'

Dr. Klaris Harley, speaking from the psychological point of view, used the words 'interchange with life in giving and taking'.

As for the arts, no matter what the artist believes his or her opinions to be, the truth is that every work of art is in fact a practical attempt at creation. May I hold you a moment longer, may I enlarge on this for a moment? The artist is setting down for herself, as well as for us, the very stuff of life. This—say the poet, the musician, and the painter—was so terrible that my heart melted within me; or, says she, look at this ordinary common courtyard, this humdrum life, this dish of apples, these children at play, let me show you how alive they are. The comic artist urges us not to miss the ridiculousness of being a human being. We sit on our hats, that solemn fellow's braces have burst, or we find that we have to try to ride a bicyole which has only one wheel.

'Why do people write novels?' Lady Murasaki, a Japanese novelist who wrote at the time of King Alfred, makes one of her characters ask. Prince Gengi answers: 'Because the writer has seen something or has been told something', and he feels 'the time must never come when people do not know that this is how things are'. Lady Murasaki, living her strange, restricted, boring, dangerous, palace existence knew how to take from what was about her, and knew how to give it to us, centuries after, and a world away.

It is thus, like the women we are, like the artists we are, that, each after our manner, we should take, and that we should give. Some of us give to the children to whom we have also given life, and who, if we will let them, will give life back to us, some of us thus nourish and support our

friends, and are, in turn, enlivened and fortified by them. All of us owe this give-and-take to the little girls with school satchels and the little boys in school caps, for they are the sons and daughters of all of us. The Art of Being a Woman is to remember that, in order to give life, we must take care to be alive ourselves.

THE END

APPENDIX I

Book List for Chapter Seven—A Gallery of Portraits

(1) *Mrs. Trollope.*

The Domestic Manners of the Americans. A section of her autobiography edited and prefaced by Michael Sadleir.

(2) *Dorothy Wordsworth: Journals.*

Famous for their descriptions of natural scenery under all sorts of conditions of weather and light. A book for those who are fond of poetry.

(3) *Emily Dickinson.*

Biography by her niece, Dickinson Bianchi. A long book, and not everybody's taste. She was, however, a strange and gifted creature well worth meeting.

(4) *Emma.*

Jane Austen's famous and delightful novel. Published in a number of editions.

(5) *Florence Nightingale.*

There are several full-length biographies, the most recent of which is by Cecil Woodham Smith. Also a well-known short life by Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians*, and a very short life (originally written for children) in *Good Citizens* by the present writer.

(6) *Geraldine Cadbury.*

Biography by Janet Whitney. An excellent portrait of a Quaker social-worker who was also the mother of a family, and who had unusual opportunities.

(7) *Jane Harrison.*

Reminiscences of a Student's Life. A short account of her own life by a charming woman scholar.

(8) *Mrs. Sidney Webb.*

Autobiography. *My Apprenticeship* and *Our Partner-*

ship. The story of a quite different kind of scholar who studied practical subjects. She writes with humour, feeling and insight about her own character.

(9) *Sarah Bernhardt.*

Several lives of her have been published, none very satisfactory. Miss Agate has written one *Madame Sarah*, and there is further information in a life of Eleonora Duse. A stormy and not very amiable character, but a very great actress.

(10) *Dame Laura Knight.*

Autobiography. *Oil Paint and Grease Paint*. The world has applauded her painting, but this story of the life of a craftsman is better than her canvases. She began to earn the family living when she was fourteen.

(11) *Karsavina.*

Autobiography. *Theatre Street*. Karsavina was a celebrated ballerina who was trained in the Imperial Ballet School in Russia.

(12) Ibsen's *Brand.*

A play which gives a frightening account of a Puritan who had no mercy on himself or anyone else.

(13) *Mrs. Ruskin.*

The Tragedy of John Ruskin by the present writer, or Peter Quennell's *Ruskin*, both include a portrait of this Puritan. The present writer's gives the fuller account of her.

(14) Ibsen's *Peer Gynt.*

A play in verse which gives a fantastic picture of a character who is the complete opposite to the Puritan.

(15) *Michael Faraday.*

There are several biographies of Faraday the celebrated scientist, and a short account for children in the present writer's *Men Who Found Out.*

(16) *Persuasion.*

Jane Austen's last novel, whose heroine is the gentle Ann Elliot.

Anthropology

Books by Margaret Mead:

Male and Female.
Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies.
**Coming of Age in Samoa.*
**Growing up in New Guinea.*
**The American Character.*

*These are available in the Penguin Series.

Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture.*

Saints

The lives of a number of the female saints give a curious picture of women's achievements and character during historical periods when most women were unable to make any mark in the world.

The reader will be struck by the intelligence and administrative ability which some of them displayed.

Some further reading suggestions made at random

A number of Bernard Shaw's plays contain provocative contributions to any discussion on woman's character and place in society, especially perhaps *Candida* and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion.* All women will not agree with his generalisations, but most will find them stimulating.

The Caravaners, a novel by *The Author of 'Elizabeth and Her German Garden'*, throws a curious light on a path that women have travelled.

The Thinking Reed. A novel by Rebecca West.
Rich selfish people 'out for a good time'.

Brighton Rock. A novel by Graham Greene.
Poor selfish people 'out for a good time'.

The Tale of Gengi. By Lady Murasaki (translated from the Japanese by Arthur Waley).
A novel in many volumes about Palace life in Japan. Written

about the year 800. Some critics place it among the world's three best novels, but it is not for all tastes.

Children in Need. By Melitta Schmideberg.

Children Without Homes (in preparation). By Theodore Tucker.

These two books give contrasting views on the important subject of child care in institutions.

Mary Kingsley. By Stephen Gwynn.

A delightful account of the life and character of one of the most sympathetic of women explorers.

Catherine the Great. By Katherine Antony.

A highly readable account of a most extraordinary woman who began life as a very poor German princess and died 'Autocrat of All the Russias'. To read it is to shake still further any remaining conventional idea of 'what women are like'—strong contrast to the saints.

Madame du Châtelet.

An account of this remarkable woman can be found in Tallentyre's *Life of Voltaire.*

Roads to Ruin. By E. S. Turner.

A most amusing book on the history of a number of obviously necessary reforms which were once opposed as disastrous innovations. It is dedicated to 'Colonel Blimp'.

Towards Relationship. By Florida Scott-Maxwell.

I read this book (written in 1939) after writing my own. The first part of *Towards Relationship* might well interest the reader of *The Art of Being a Woman* for its statement of many of the same ideas and opinions from a slightly different point of view and with a decidedly different emphasis, and for its curious element of mysticism.

Parents' Problems and Sex Education. By Theodore Tucker.

A useful book on an important subject.

APPENDIX II

A Short List of Societies and Other Bodies

(It can be taken for granted that all voluntary societies are anxious for new members, and that most of them want active members, and want to form branches.)

Note also that almost every profession also has its professional societies (for example, the Society of Authors, and the International P.E.N. Club for my own profession). Many of these professional groups publish journals which keep their readers up to date when they are otherwise isolated. It would have taken far too much room to list them here.

ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN,
4, *St. James's Square, London, S.W.*1.

A Government corporation rather like the B.B.C. It is concerned with the showing of pictures, films, encouragement of drama, and so forth. It has branches in the big provincial centres. For these addresses, consult local telephone book.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE,
9, *Fitzroy Square, London, W.*1.

For those interested in producing and reading plays. Members can obtain a sufficient number of copies of a play for these purposes. Acting fees and other arrangements can be made through the League.

BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY AND ORDER OF ST. JOHN,
12, *Grosvenor Crescent, London, S.W.*1.

Undertakes much work under the National Health Act; trains in First Aid, Home Nursing, etc. For branches, consult local telephone book.

BUREAU OF CURRENT AFFAIRS,
117, *Piccadilly, London, W.*1.

Publishes discussion pamphlets, map reviews, etc., useful

for discussions and meeting on 'current affairs' subjects. Factual, not political.

COUNCILS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF RURAL ENGLAND AND WALES,

4, *Hobart Place, London, S.W.*1.

SALTIRE SOCIETY,

Gladstone's Land, 483, *Lawn Market, Edinburgh* 1.

These societies are for those interested in the look of the country. They have a great number of local branches. Information from them on other kindred societies (that for The Preservation of Ancient Buildings or of Woodlands, for example). The Saltire Society is also concerned with all the visual arts as well as with books and Scottish education, etc.

MARRIAGE GUIDANCE COUNCIL,

78, *Duke Street, Grosvenor Square, London, W.*1.

Information from them on local Marriage Councillors, etc.

MUSICAL SOCIETIES.

Consult *Who's Who in Music* or Hinrichsen's *Musical Year Book*. The first has a list running to twenty or thirty closely printed pages giving addresses of such societies, besides another twenty pages on Clubs, Associations, Festivals, Awards and Prizes.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH,

39, *Queen Anne Street, London, W.*1.

Information on Child Guidance Clinics, Educational Psychology, etc. Their journal, *Mental Health*, is interesting and contains reviews that keep the reader up to date on the relevant literature.

NATIONAL BOOK LEAGUE,

7, *Albemarle Street, London, W.*1.

This society arranges book exhibitions of many kinds, lectures by writers, children's 'book weeks', issues a journal, and has local branches. Members can obtain book lists on

specialised subjects—for example, on Children's Books, or on Industrial Management.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE,
26, *Bedford Square, London, W.C.*1.

This society collates voluntary and government activities under this head. Information on all Social Service matters and on local branches can be had from them.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES,
39, *Eccleston Street, London, S.W.*1.

Can put you in touch with your local Women's Institute.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF YOUNG FARMERS' CLUBS,
55, *Gower Street, London, W.C.*1.

A widespread organisation. It does not cater only for young farmers, but is an admirable source of information on anything connected with the land—not only stock and crop growing but such things as horticulture, poultry-keeping, and bee keeping. Information from them on more specialised societies.

NATIONAL UNION OF TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILDS,
2, *Cromwell Place, London, S.W.*7.

The city equivalent to the Women's Institutes. Can put you in touch with your local Guild.

WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICES,
Headquarters: 41, *Tothill Street, London, S.W.*1.

This body was organised mainly to help Local Authorities. Its activities vary from place to place, sometimes overlapping those of the Women's Institutes and the Red Cross Society. Often undertakes such jobs as running canteens for service personnel, helping in hospitals, forming old people's clubs, and has a 'godmother' scheme for children under the care of the county or borough authority.

Further Suggestions

Is there a 'Parent Teachers' Association' going in your local school?

Is there a Good Neighbours' Association which organises such services as Baby Sitters?

Is your local hospital in need of any part time help? This might be help in the wards, librarian's work, clerical or canteen work, etc. If not, could the hospital put you in touch with one that does need such help?

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